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## The In-Service Training of Sunday School Personnel

Walter J. Schott

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THE IN-SERVICE TRAINING OF SUNDAY SCHOOL PERSONNEL

by

Walter J. Schott

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the  
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In Partial Fulfillment  
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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

A thoughtful businessman remarked that he had discovered a new reason for believing that a church is a divine institution. "No other enterprise," he said, "could survive if managed so haphazardly."<sup>1</sup> This statement is so true of the Sunday school. Generally speaking this school is an agency within the church, yet inseparable from the church whole. The Sunday school is more than a business enterprise. It is and basically should be a soul saving station, but it is also an educational institution. The affairs with which it must deal, should be of sufficient importance to be efficiently and effectively handled.

The work of the Sunday school is maintained by lay members who voluntarily give of their time and effort for the cause of Christ and the church. Many of these lay members have had little or no training in teaching techniques or principles basic to teaching. God has blessed the work of these willing and dedicated workers with a measure of success. However, the church needs to recognize the fact that if these same workers would have had the privilege of proper Christian educational training, a more extended work could have been achieved in the school.

One of the difficult tasks that a pastor, superintendent and/or a Christian education director face, is that of keeping the Sunday

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<sup>1</sup>G.S. Dobbins, The Church Book (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1951), Forward.



school personnel interested, enthusiastic and alert. A teacher who has been appointed or elected to a position may begin with a real burst of vigor and vitality, but after a short period of time get into a routine that becomes stagnant and complacent. This creates a need for something that will challenge and stimulate the teacher toward greater achievement in his work.

Christian education is more and more coming to the forefront. The church has been viewing the progress that secular education is making in our day. Educational standards are being raised and better qualified teachers are being sought to train and educate our children. A great number of churches are realizing that if they are to reach the unreached, they too will have to raise its educational standards and have a staff that is well qualified to instruct its pupils. On the other hand there are scores of churches who have not seen or felt a need for improvement in their schools. These are churches who have not realized the great potential that their school has in reaching out into the unreached areas. In the United States, the West coast states, Northeastern states and parts of the South are noting a tremendous growth in population. These areas present a real challenge to the church and its educational work. Multitudes of people, young and old alike, are looking to the Sunday school for spiritual help that will be of permanent value to their lives. When a Church school thinks in terms of eternal values, then it also is made aware of the tremendous responsibility that its personnel has to those who attend the school.

A Sunday school sensing these needs will want to give its very

best through its organization, administration and personnel. It may also need to consider the fact of having an agency through which its workers can be trained. To do an adequate job will require training on the part of every worker. To train workers is a task that every Sunday school faces. A superintendent may discover that he has people who are willing workers but lack the know-how of adequately handling a teaching situation.

Opinions differ at this point as some Christian leaders think that training Christian workers is not really beneficial, and that a teacher having fully dedicated himself to the task of teaching is more essential than training. Such thought would seem to be based upon faulty reasoning. Those who have taken this matter concerning the need of training to the test, have found that it is not an either/or, but a both/and basis. Training programs properly planned not only stress the point of educating and training personnel, but contain a vital spiritual emphasis.

An agency that has brought much success to the Sunday school in training workers is the WORKERS' CONFERENCE. It is a means of in-service training. Although its primary purpose is to those who are actively participating in the Sunday school work, it does not exclude anyone who desires such training. The workers' conference schedules regular meetings at which time the entire personnel meets for the purpose of improving its school. It also seeks to unify and correlate the work of the school.

With need for workers' training evident, the value of the workers' conference can better be understood. Therefore, the Sunday

school which desires to see continual growth in its work, may well need to consider the importance of in-service training for its workers. A training program for staff members becomes an imperative necessity for the school that would fulfill its mission.

#### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to investigate the present importance and examine the potential values of the Sunday school workers' conference as a major technique used for general in-service training of Sunday school personnel.

In order to understand the problem it was necessary to (1) determine the "why" and "how" of a workers' conference; (2) but, it was also to state the purpose of the conference, considering points that are helpful in creating a better understanding of the task of the Sunday school and its personnel; (3) to consider the significance of planning a program that is adequate and suitable to meet the need of any given Sunday school, particularly noting the importance of being well organized, formulating the program far in advance; (4) to consider the elements of a workers' conference so necessary in making it a worthwhile program, giving special emphasis to the leadership so vital to the success of a conference; and (5) to note points of procedure that will properly mold a conference into an agency that will operate both efficiently and effectively through its works.

#### Justification of the Study

Secular education is constantly striving to improve its academic

standards. Christian education is becoming more aware of the need to improve its standards, but still there are areas of training whose resources have been barely tapped.

Workers' conferences that are being conducted in different churches under competent leadership have, under God's blessing, met with success in the growth and development of the Sunday school and its personnel. The author, who is a member of the Dakota Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, has noted that in 1957 and 1958 twenty-five churches offered leadership training courses.<sup>1</sup> This is approximately one-third of the total number of churches in the Dakota Conference. This is commendable, however at the same time there was a statistical loss of 304 from the Sunday school roll in 1958, with a decrease in average attendance of twenty-two.<sup>2</sup> Robert D. Bennett, Professor in Christian Education at Western Evangelical Seminary, Portland, Oregon, and Director of Teacher-Training of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, made a statistical survey in 1946 and again in 1951 of workers' conference needs. The data furnished, definitely revealed a need for training with many churches requesting aid in the formulation and administration of a practical program. Wesley Wildermuth, a member of the same conference, made a similar survey in 1950. His survey indicated that many pastors, superintendents and teachers expressed

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<sup>1</sup>Robert H. Feind, ed., "Journal of the Dakota Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church," Statistical Reports by Clarence Knoepfle, Statistician, Official Minutes of the 76th Annual Session (Milbank, South Dakota: Robert Feind, Publisher, 1959), p. 116-119.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

their desire of the need of training in educational procedure.

The necessity for training is not only evident in these specific areas, but church leaders representing various denominations have expressed the need of a medium for training workers.

Having been associated with Sunday schools who offered no training for their personnel, and who either did not care to set up such a program or else did not know how, gave incentive and rise to a study of this nature. The concern for a growing Sunday school in the Dakota Conference, the Evangelical United Brethren denomination and the church in general brings further reason for this undertaking.

This study was compiled as a result of research through written sources pertaining to this area of work, classroom learning and personal experiences. It is hoped that this material will be of value to those who come in contact with this study, and that it will serve as a practical tool for all who wish to use it as a guide.

#### Limitation of the Study

Although there may be a slight overlapping into the area of teacher-training this study places its emphasis upon the workers' conference. As the title of the thesis indicates, this material is outlined and prepared for the use of those who are in-service, active as Sunday school officers, teachers and assistants. This however, does not exclude anyone who wishes to participate in a training program such as this. The Sunday school needs to have workers in reserve ready to fill in in the event of a vacancy.



### Method of Procedure

This study has not been written with the idea of creating something that is entirely new and totally different from what has been written in the area. Rather, it is a research of various denominational and inter-denominational sources, along with personal observations and experiences in the area of this study. The endeavor was to create a study that would be practical enough to be used by any protestant church, whether large or small; however, it is understood that there are churches who have established their personnel training programs and standards applying to their own educational purposes. Thus, part of this study may not apply to every church. The main point of emphasis is that a Sunday school must have some type of training program to educate its personnel. No two churches have identical problems, needs or interests; establishing then, that each local church will need to formulate a program of educational training that will fulfill the purpose of its particular needs.

Literature which has been written in the area of the workers' conference is somewhat limited and at times too brief. Sunday school leaders are becoming aware that more work needs to be done within this scope. However, what has been written is not being minimized nor looked upon with a critical point of view; but in complementing some of the ideas which have been made available, into one source, it is hoped that this study will make for a more valuable and stabilizing contribution to this area.

### Definition of Terms Used

For the purposes of this study the following terms were defined as follows:

- In-Service This term was used to denote all persons who are serving in any official capacity within the Sunday school.
- Training This is a means of preparing through instruction so as to make one more qualified and proficient.
- Sunday School This term indicates that agency of the church giving religious instruction on Sunday. The term will be used synonymously with Church school and school.
- Agency This may be one of any number of parts within the church to which has been given the power and authority to act on matters pertaining to the church. Examples of such would be Sunday School Board, Council of Administration and any Executive Committees.
- Personnel This term includes all officers, teachers and assistants of the Sunday school. The words staff and workers will be used synonymously.
- Workers' Conference The workers' conference is a gathering of Sunday school personnel to a conference planned and conducted for the purpose of improving the educational program of the Sunday school. It

also provides for a time of worship, business, education and fellowship.

Christian Education The term Christian Education means an education that is founded upon the basic principles of the Word of God, used to bring about a change in lives who have not accepted Christ as their personal Savior, and to develop Christian lives toward a more mature state.

#### Organization of the Thesis

The opening chapter includes such details as are essential to the orientation of the subject. Chapter two sets forth the purpose of the workers' conference. Planning the workers' conference is the main point of emphasis in chapter three, followed by conducting a workers' conference in chapter four. Practical points of procedure for a workers' conference are found in chapter five which presents a more detailed look in bringing out some of the finer points of the workers' conference. Chapter six is a summary of results of research and a statement of conclusions from materials presented in this thesis.

## CHAPTER II

### PURPOSE OF THE WORKERS' CONFERENCE

## CHAPTER II

### Purpose of the Workers' Conference

Every organization or agency operating within the church must have a purpose for its existence.

Men of experience claim that workers' conferences are the one basic requirement for success in church schools.<sup>1</sup> A Church school will never reach its highest potential or possibilities without such a meeting or some equivalent.

J. Arthur Heck in his booklet, "The Workers' Conference," says:

A workers' conference is a purposeful, carefully planned meeting of the teachers and officers of the church school, in which there are presented and discussed problems and questions relating to the improvement of teaching and learning in the school. It is primarily an educational group. Its major interests are the teacher, the pupil, lesson materials, methods of teaching procedure, Christian action projects, problems of supervision, school discipline, and related matters. It is appropriate for such a conference to discuss also problems of administration provided they relate to the improvement of the educational work of the church.<sup>2</sup>

Each person involved with this meeting has a voice and a part. All are sharing in a common interest toward making their school a better educational factor. The word "conference" means what it infers; it is a sharing of ideas by a number of people through the means of discussion and consultation. While the main emphasis is

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<sup>1</sup>Erwin G. Benson, Planning Church School Workers' Conferences (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1952), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>J. Arthur Heck, The Workers' Conference (Dayton: The Board of Christian Education of the E. U. B. Church, 1948), p. 9.



on the conference idea, yet the devotional, educational, and fellowship features are important.<sup>1</sup> Although these elements will be somewhat integrated into the whole of this thesis, another chapter will deal specifically with these and other elements. Church schools need to stay with the tenor of the time. What was done twenty or thirty years ago may be entirely out-moded and out-dated. Church schools must have tools that will do the job for today and the days to come. The inadequacy of up-to-date tools has been a detriment to the schools. To rely on tradition and past experiences does not always prove profitable. There must be a continual searching for new and better ideas in which to promote the work, so that through it the maximum may be attained. This is why training is so important. It keeps workers abreast with the times. Leavitt states that:

They also need the incentive and inspiration to best effort and the challenge to faithful, sustained effort, which contact with fellow-workers gives. The workers' conference brings the workers together under conditions that stimulate study, quicken interest, cement friendships, enlarge visions, deepen responsibility, strengthen loyalty, and give largest incentive to best work.<sup>2</sup>

#### To Create A Better Understanding of the Church School Task

Have you ever gone out into a densely wooded area and then become lost? Perhaps you had no sense of direction for lack of a compass and the sun was hid by the thick mass of clouds. You began

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<sup>1</sup>Guy P. Leavitt, How to Conduct the Workers' Conference (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1953), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

to wend your way around and after a great deal of foot-work and searching finally found a trail that led out into the open. This is a typical situation in many churches today. What should be everybody's business is actually nobody's business. From an organizational point of view, many Church schools do not know what they are actually trying to do or where they are going in their endeavors. They have no goal in mind. There needs to be a sense of direction in the work. This can be done by defining what the task is as a school. Effective service requires a clear and distinct understanding of the work to be done. Mere assumptions give no foundation to the job that is to be accomplished. Old workers are prone to forget what the purposes are, whereas new workers are not always acquainted with the purpose of the school in what it wishes to accomplish.

There should be an understanding of general and specific aims of the school. The accomplishment of the Church schools task comes by aims and objectives that are well defined. Aims may be broken down into two segments, those that are general and those that are specific. The latter is concerned with the immediate activities while the former deals with both the now and the tomorrow. Aims should grow out of immediate needs which come through the classroom via the teacher-pupil relationship. These aims should constantly be before the workers to be discussed so that there is an understanding of what has been done, what is being done, and of what needs to be done in the future. Through the workers' conference the participants learn from each other as to what is being done in the school. One

writer insists that "the average term of officers and teachers in Sunday school is three years."<sup>1</sup> If this is true, than conferences are exceedingly necessary to provide a periodic discussion of the task at hand.<sup>2</sup>

Church schools who are working energetically at their tasks are noting good progress in their endeavors. These schools contribute their success to statements like these:

"Our Sunday-school workers must catch enthusiasm and Christian growth."

"Willingness to work and leadership education explain our growth."

"Consecrated, faithful, and trained teachers are needed."

"The feeling of responsibility on the part of teachers and officers will be radiated to the pupils."

"Our leadership personnel has a deepening of Christian spirit in the matter of interesting others."

"We hold regular executive meetings and workers' conferences."

"This church builds its annual program and carries it out."

"You do not win Christians through contests: you win Christians through Christ."<sup>3</sup>

A leader may ask himself, "How can I make my school go and grow?" The answer in light of the foregoing statements might be:

Engender enthusiasm that is contagious.

Provide a program that wins.

Render a service that is notable.

Tell people about it.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Benson, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>R. D. Heim, Leading A Sunday Church School (Philadelphia: The Mulenberg Press, 1950), p. 309.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

### To Create A Sense of Joint Responsibility

It is a wonderful thing to be able to recognize the task of a school as a staff, but it is equally important to see the responsibility that each individual has to the school and to each other. There is a definite relationship and interdependence of the various parts. Each individual should clearly see the place of his own work in the program of the Church school. The Church school which has a corps of workers working and praying together with a sense of oneness and understanding of each other and their work, is indeed a very fortunate school. A school should be likened to a team of horses pulling at an even, steady pace, purposing within their hearts to reach the goal set before them.

A church itself is an organism; but its work is carried on through organization. As a Christian, every worker is a part of the great spiritual organism which is the church; as a worker, he must have a definite place in the organization.<sup>1</sup>

Each worker must feel that he belongs to the organization and that he plays a vital role in all of its activities. When a person gets the idea that he just goes along because the rest do and does not himself feel a part of the group, it results in a spiritual deadness and loss of the school effectiveness. A lack of co-operation among the workers at any point will weaken the whole program.

No Church school is without its problems. They are not always found within the classroom, but are often outside the class. These may be administrative, organizational or personnel problems. Here

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<sup>1</sup>Benson, op. cit., p. 15.

is a point which needs the co-operation of everyone concerned. Precious time is often wasted on trivial matters, such as trying to determine whether hot-dogs or hamburgers should be served at a Sunday school picnic! You have heard the expression, "many heads are better than one." Yet, many heads going each their separate way will not bring about a joint responsibility in solving a problem. Facing a problem head-on and then co-operatively pooling ideas for a possible solution, will save a lot of confusion and further frustration. Suggestions in a group meeting are made that one person alone could not think of. Through the functions and experiences of a group meeting, the personnel becomes better acquainted with each other. When people understand each other they can work together much more harmoniously. Working on a togetherness basis provides a feeling that all are on the same team, working toward the same goal. There should be a sense of conviction on the part of each worker, that if he lags behind it hurts the whole team, hindering its progress. Basically, it would be a hindrance to the work of God.

The workers' conference is a place where current problems can be dealt with co-operatively. As the progress of each item is noted, it will give encouragement and renewed enthusiasm to each worker. The Sunday school like the human body is made up of many members which make up the whole of the organism; each has its specific part or responsibility to the whole.



### To Guide Workers in Improving Methods

Two of the important tasks of a Church school in this particular area is to keep up-to-date and to guide workers in improving methods.

Verdia Burke says:

Workers need to keep up on the latest educational methods and materials. Public school teachers accept this as one of their chief obligations. This is even more important for church school teachers. Of all subjects Christian living is the most vital and also the most difficult to teach. Moreover, the time allotted for it is so brief that every minute should be used to the best advantage.<sup>1</sup>

Improvement in method is secured when there is a better grasp of the subject matter and the development of skill in guiding the learning process.<sup>2</sup> Many Sunday school teachers do not try to improve their methods. There are two main reasons for this: (1) "I have taught this way for many years and its worked just fine, so why change;" and (2) "I am too old to learn." A conference in which workers of all ages meet will discover that improvements can be made. The proverb which says, "you can not teach an old dog new tricks," becomes void.

Dr. Albert F. Harper says, 'Scientific studies have proved what our casual observation has led us to expect--adults can learn and learn rapidly. Professor E. L. Thorndike and associates of Columbia University spent two years carrying out scientific experiments to determine the influence of age upon learning. His studies reveal that the most effective time for learning is not in childhood, but early adulthood--from twenty to thirty. Although learning ability begins to decline very slowly after thirty, it is such a gradual decline that it is no serious handicap.'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Verdia Burke, The Workers' Conference (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1956), p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Benson, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 11-12.

Every teacher and worker must remember that he is dealing with human beings whose destiny may depend upon his effectiveness or ineffectiveness. Teaching should be done both effectively and efficiently. Real teaching is not a cut and dried affair; . . . The method to be used in teaching must be decided by the specific goal in mind.<sup>1</sup>

Every teaching session ought to have a vital message. The learner should be able to understand it, accept it, live it, and obtain eternal life. Everything that a teacher or worker does to make this message effective in the heart and life of the Sunday school pupil is method. A method, together with the material being used should never be an end in itself, but should serve as a means to an end. One method or even several methods might be excellent in a given teaching situation, whereas in another circumstance these same methods would be wholly insufficient and ineffective. A trained teacher will at his own discretion use several methods in a single class period. The use of several methods may be done consciously or unconsciously. The objective that the teacher has in mind will determine to a great extent the method to be used.

"Any particular method, such as a story, a lecture or a discussion, will have different outcomes in different total learning situations. The story may be effective or ineffective, depending upon the nature of the aim and the attitude of the pupils. The lecture method may be good or bad, depending upon the teacher's presentation and on the nature of the content given. An excursion may succeed or fail, depending on the

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<sup>1</sup>C. B. Eavey, Principles of Teaching for Christian Teachers, quoted in H. A. Fisher, Method in Teaching (Butler: The Higley Press, n.d.), p. 15.

interests of the pupils and the management of the teacher. The value of any method depends on the extent to which it is adapted to the requirements of the total situation."<sup>1</sup>

It is important that every Church school worker be made aware of the latest educational materials and methods. Public school teachers avail themselves of the latest in the educational field because it is important and vital to their position; in the Christian realm it should be even more important.

New ideas and developments in the field of Christian education can be brought to the workers attention through the workers' conference. Recent books and periodicals can be brought to the conference for review or for the purpose of checking them out to the workers. The worker who searches for new ideas and experiments with them is certainly apt to create a more wholesome and pleasant surrounding in his teaching, than a worker who has little or no ambition to improve his teaching.

### To Provide Motivation

Motivation is that inner impulse or desire which moves a person to action. The why of teaching is motivation. The success or failure of a Church school will largely depend upon the interest, devotion and inspiration shown by the workers.

Interest To actively share and take part in a workers' conference shows that one has an interest and concern in the work of the Sunday school. Each individual worker can be a spark of light

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

which spreads to fellow-workers. A group of workers who are interested in their work will find that this interest will not be confined to this group, but will spread throughout the entire school.

Devotion A consecrated worker who is giving himself to the task in all earnestness and sincerity will experience many rewarding tokens for his efforts. Every Church school is in need of such workers. One of the primary setbacks of a large number of schools is due to the fact that many workers are not willing to give themselves wholeheartedly to their work and in many instances are not dependable. H. E. Tower, in his book, "Church Use of Audio-Visuals", makes these statements which apply so well at this point:

The turnover in leadership personnel in most churches is very high. This is due partly to incompetence, but more largely to lack of consecration and commitment to the task. One important part of the leadership training task is to impart to leaders a desire to give of themselves and to help them realize the significance of their task so that they will stay with it even when the going is hard.<sup>1</sup>

A devoted and dedicated corps of workers who are giving of their best will bring immeasurable success to a Church school.

Inspiration This is a stimulus which leads a worker to some creative thought or idea. A great deal is heard about "school spirit" these days. Much of it is needed in a workers' conference to stimulate and challenge every worker to such a degree that each one may strive to attain greater accomplishments toward a set goal. There needs to be a strong conviction that the work can and must be done,

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<sup>1</sup>H. E. Tower, Church Use of Audio-Visuals (New York: Abingdon Press, 1950), p. 96-97.

and that there is joy to be found in the doing of it.<sup>1</sup> Occasionally an outside speaker may be scheduled to bring an inspirational presentation; however, the inspiration should largely come from within the group itself. If the program elements seem truly relevant to the workers, and if they open vistas of new and better approaches to their tasks, the conference will serve to bring enduring inspiration to the workers.<sup>2</sup>

To be able to get persons to do what they know they ought to do is one of the difficult objectives that a workers' conference faces. As in all learning, guided experience is the best teacher. Without the actual doing there can be no satisfaction. The motivation which causes action must begin at the top and work its way down to the place where the whole school becomes contaminated with this process.

The following suggestions made by Heim are meant to help the leader of the Sunday school motivate his colleagues for active participation in the available opportunities for their leadership education:

1. Set an example
2. Convince workers of their need
3. Convince them that they can grow
4. Show them they will not be embarrassed
5. Help them see the real interest in the work
6. Help them develop a hunger for such study
7. Make the means practicable, readily within reach
8. Make sure that the experience will contribute
9. Plan for appropriate marking of progress
10. Build workers into the fellowship of the cause<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>I. W. Jones, The Superintendent Plans His Work (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1958), p. 67.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Heim, op. cit., p. 148-149.

The emphasis of our whole program should be based upon the fact that we are not merely workers or workers together, but that we are workers together with and for God. The end of all Christian teaching is to motivate to Christian living and action.<sup>1</sup>

### To Bring Encouragement by Giving Reports

If there is anything that will give support or confidence to a group, it is a report which shows a degree of progress in the area with which it is concerned.

Unquestionably, the function of reports could profitably be studied more widely. It does seem that many would be put in different form if the educational and inspirational purpose were clearly in view. For example, the typical Sunday Church School report of attendance and offerings is a dreary recital of numbers. Actually, however, these figures disclose such vital things as the school's retention or loss of pupils; the abilities of teachers to teach, win, and hold pupils; the effects of rooms and equipment; departmental efficiency; curriculum adaptation; character development and religious growth. A proper report will tell what the figures reveal. Its precise content will be determined by the purpose in terms of response desired and by the persons to whom it is addressed.<sup>2</sup>

The presentation of Sunday school data can be reported in many different ways; by printed or oral announcement, on bulletin board, by chart, letter or church bulletin. These reports ought to be intelligible, brief, clear and concise. Reports should extend beyond the personnel of the school to the congregation, community and in particular to the parents. Although a conference will want to make a survey of the overall progress of the school, there is no reason

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<sup>1</sup>Tower, op. cit., p. 85-86.

<sup>2</sup>Heim, op. cit., p. 293.

why the workers themselves should not of their own accord appraise their program and activities.

Souls That Have Been Won to Christ A few months ago this author heard a pastor speaking to a group of seminary students. He made this remark, "Almost every Sunday I have one of the teachers in my Sunday school come to me and say, that someone in their class had found Christ as their Savior." More Sunday schools need to see the actual worth of a soul.

In Proverbs 22:6 we read; Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.<sup>1</sup> The workers of a Sunday school should realize that they are to train the pupils in the way they should go, not the way they would go. Of course this training should begin in the home with the parents, but so many parents are not giving their children a proper religious start in life. Thus the Church school becomes all the more responsible to those who attend its classes of religious instruction. Spiritual training cannot begin too early nor stop too late.<sup>2</sup>

Through its personnel, a workers' conference can supply the spiritual emphasis and evangelistic zeal which every school needs. Blessed is the Sunday school that sees boys and girls, young people and adults come to find Christ as their Savior through dedicated vessels who have faithfully imparted the truth. A worker who brings

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<sup>1</sup>Proverbs 22:6.

<sup>2</sup>Lois E. LeBar, Children in the Bible School (Los Angeles: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1952), p. 166.

a report of numerical victories spiritually speaking, will give a real lift of encouragement as well as a challenge to the whole personnel.

Pupils Progress in Bible Study and Growth in the Christian Life Because of the time factor involved, it would be impossible for a workers' conference to review the status of every student in the school concerning his spiritual growth. However, it behooves every teacher to sit down and evaluate the progress of each student in the class. If this is done, a brief report can be made at the conference meeting. Individual cases of progress may be noted as well as individual cases that may be of chief concern to the teacher. A school recognizes or at least it should recognize that each individual has the capacity for growth in Christian experience, and that there is also a need for such growth. Not only do children and young people have capacities for growth, but mother and dad have the same capacity. Wherever there is constructive participation and interaction of personalities and ideas, adults can grow too. These are factors that can become dynamic in any group.

The action and conduct of each teacher as an individual may instill more in the lives of the pupils than a whole quarter's lessons fully explained to the individual classes.

#### Gains or Losses in Attendance

Less than three-tenths of the total population of the United States is enrolled in Sunday Church Schools. They attend on the average only about 60-65 per cent of the Sundays in each year, and no one knows how small is the percentage of punctuality.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Heim, op. cit., p. 150.



Whether we want to admit it or not, records are a necessity, not only in the business world, but also in the work of the church. A carefully devised record system that is kept up-to-date can serve for more purposes than commonly supposed. This data will render information about the pupil and the school. This is the type of thing that a workers' conference is concerned with, as it endeavors to stimulate its numerical growth. It presents a picture of the school as it stands now. Mrs. Jones may have had an increase of ten pupils during the quarter whereas Mrs. Smith may have had a loss of five. Mrs. Jones' report at the conference should be an incentive for Mrs. Smith to work harder during the next quarter. Some losses are inevitable, but on the other hand the reason often lies within the teaching situation itself. It may be that the class with no gain has had no follow-up work. Perhaps the teacher has not shown an interest in the pupils, or discipline on the part of one of the pupils is presenting a problem to the rest of the class. R. D. Heim lists ten points essential for securing attendance.

1. Have the best possible school. . .
2. Have a common attendance goal. . .
3. Care for the absentees. . .
4. Surround the pupils with friendship. . .
5. Avoid eliminations. . .
6. Secure home co-operation. . .
7. Send quarterly reports. . .
8. Recognize achievements in this respect. . .
9. Avoid contests. . .<sup>1</sup>
10. Educate all concerned.

Not only should the workers' conference be aware of the facts, but the whole membership. They should know about the difficulties

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 150-155.

that arise through their irregularity; they should feel in themselves that they are missing something that is important to them, and they should realize that there are special privileges, joys and blessings which are escaping them by not being in attendance. This matter of attendance is one of the great problems that any conference faces as it evaluates its gains and losses. It presents every worker with a real challenge to do his very best.

Contacts in the Community Whether a school experiences success or failure gives no excuse for its personnel to sit back and say, Well, I guess there is nothing more that we can do." This is not so. It often limits itself by its selfish desires. There are many people both young and old who have never darkened the door of a church. Any father, mother, son or daughter who is not affiliated with a church is a prospective Sunday school member. There are many opportunities for new contacts, particularly in areas where there is a continual increase in population. A conference must see the need and the value of follow-up work of those within the Sunday school as well as those without. A growing school will have a steady influx of new pupils and it is the obligation of everyone concerned to do the utmost in preserving as many of these students as possible.

#### To Point Out Strengths And Weaknesses of the Conference

The foregoing four points will pretty much point out the strengths and weaknesses of a workers' conference. Perhaps most of the time has been spent in one area to the neglect of the other. A

conference should be fostered in the interests of a better educational program in our churches. Dr. E. L. Shaver gives us some very timely points along this line:

- a. It has a very practical objective, the constant development of new ways and means for making the church's educational program more effective. Contrasted with the more formal methods of leadership education the workers' conference goes right to the point and begins its work upon the administrative and teaching problems which are right at hand.
- b. The decisions reached are acted upon immediately. They are not so much information which has been stored away for some indefinite future use. Even though the quantity and quality of product may not be as desirable as one would like them to be, the proportion of plans which do arrive at the action stage is encouraging.
- c. The workers' conference, being a time-honored institution, has the force of history and tradition behind it. It is something with which most churches are familiar, and when one speaks of improving workers' conferences or teachers' meetings, he is assured of an interested response, for he is building upon a foundation already laid.
- d. For these reasons and others there is no inconsiderable interest in and habitual loyalty to these meetings. Since educational growth in any class or meeting is in direct relation to the enthusiasm and interest engendered, the kind of conference under discussion rates high.
- e. Workers' conferences reach a far larger percentage of leaders in the church's educational program than other agencies and means of leadership improvement such as conventions, training classes, reading programs, or individual guidance.
- f. These conferences often develop a large measure of good fellowship, consecration to the teaching task, and a morale which are as of much value in producing good teaching as the acquisition of facts and skills.
- g. In the light of all these factors it is now conceded that the workers' conference is in fact one of the best ways to train leaders. It is one of several types of leadership education "on the job" which is so much needed at the present time.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Erwin L. Shaver, The Workers' Conference Manual (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1938), p. 20-21.

On the other hand, workers' conferences have their weaknesses. Anyone who has attended a meeting comparable to a workers' conference has experienced and borne the pain of some insignificant little detail that took up nearly the entire program. Perhaps a meeting was called to decide an important issue only to have it turn into a gossip session. At another meeting a problem was presented which should have been met face to face, but instead everyone talked all around the problem and consequently no solution was presented. At still another session a speaker was invited to give an inspiring message only to have a sense of appreciation for his speaking, but with no motivation to action.

We are living in a day and age in which people and machinery are moving at such a rapid pace. Christian lay leaders cannot afford to waste any time, since the work of the church as any other business must move forward. Every church having or planning to have a workers' conference should strive to make its meetings purposeful with a determined goal in mind. It is quality, not quantity that counts. Every meeting should seek its highest level of attainment possible, not going off into left field or some other meaningless spot.

### Summary

Purpose is the important element that characterizes a workers' conference. A purposeful conference will be one in which there is contemplated a definite outcome in terms of change in the local school.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Heck, op. cit., p. 9.

A conference purposes: (1) to create a better understanding of the Church school task by having definite aims or objectives in the direction of its work; (2) to create a sense of joint responsibility making each worker feel that he belongs to the organization and plays a vital role in all of its activities; (3) to guide workers in improving methods which serve as a means to an end; (4) to provide motivation through interest, devotion and inspiration; (5) to bring encouragement by giving reports of results concerning souls won to Christ, pupils progress in Bible study and growth in the Christian life, noting gains or losses in attendance stressing the necessity of records, and noting contacts made in the community; and (6) to point out strengths and weaknesses of the conference.

CHAPTER III  
PLANNING THE WORKERS' CONFERENCE

### CHAPTER III

#### PLANNING THE WORKERS' CONFERENCE

Well-planned workers' conferences do not happen by mere co-incidence. Some person or committee is responsible for working out a program long before the meetings ever take place. The success or failure of a conference depends largely on the amount of preliminary planning. Many of these meetings draw a poor attendance simply because previous conferences have established a reputation for haphazard planning.<sup>1</sup> By haphazard planning is meant conferences that have had little planning, no planning at all, or even if the plans may have been good, it has fallen into incompetent hands of leadership.

Time has become a very valuable commodity in this modern day and age. People have the choice of going to so many worthwhile events today that they need not waste their time in attending meetings that do not present a challenge or contribute something worthwhile to their personal being. J. Arthur Heck says:

If workers' conferences are going to succeed they must prove their worth to those for whose benefit they are called, and if they are to prove their worth they will have to be planned with the utmost care. Too many persons think that when there is a "discussion," no particular planning in advance can be done or is really necessary. This is a strange and unhappy delusion. In some respects it is more necessary and more difficult to think through plans for a period of group discussion than for one in which an address will be given, an article read, or a

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<sup>1</sup>Erwin G. Benson, Planning Church School Workers' Conferences (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1952), p. 23.

book reviewed.<sup>1</sup>

### The Organization

A workers' conference has need for organization like any other agency within the church. Unless it has tools with which to operate, the conference cannot function. Leaders in some churches feel that organization is not a very essential thing in accomplishing the Lord's work. The minus signs that appear in some church records speak to this very point.

It will be admitted that any group of persons can be "organized to death." When maintenance of the organization requires a great deal of time and attention; when small matters are delayed by red tape; when the organization becomes an end in itself in stead of a means to purpose, than the organization defeats its intended purpose and ceases to be useful.<sup>2</sup> However, organization is necessary since group action affords opportunities that could not be possible through individual endeavor. Through organization resources can be pooled and used, responsibilities shared and a more united effort can be massed when needed. It gets the right people together in the right way to do the right things.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>J. Arthur Heck, The Workers' Conference (The Board of Christian Education of the E.U.B. Church, 1948), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>R. D. Heim, Leading A Sunday Church School (Philadelphia: The Mulenberg Press, 1950), p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



Then group action, made possible by organization, provides for larger experience and greater service. In Christian education any of the major aspects of the curriculum -- study-and-instruction, worship, fellowship or service -- demands a group setting for its full operation. People learn together. In all the leadership educational work of the church, furthermore, skilled leadership can be secured, materials and equipment provided, and enterprises undertaken on a group basis which would be impossible for individual members.

As a second reason for organization, there is educational value, -- Christian education value -- in organizational experience itself, particularly when the organization makes democratic participation possible. Organization provides for people to fit into a program; to respond to expectations; to carry out responsibilities in and for the group. All those are of high value in the development of Christian personality living abundantly.

These, then, are the two purposes of organization: to render group action more effective in educational results; and to provide in the organization itself an educational medium. Both are to be recognized by the Sunday Church School leader and constantly kept in view because of the great danger that an organization will be stressed for its own sake.<sup>1</sup>

The workers' conference may be planned either by an individual or a committee appointed for this purpose. The latter is preferable as several minds working together can accomplish more than a single mind, generally speaking. A church sensing the need for this type of a program will need someone to make the initial start. Immediately the question is raised, "who is the logical person to do the planning?" A Christian education director, Sunday school superintendent or pastor would be the logical persons to plan such a program. Many churches do not have a director of Christian education, so the superintendent and/or the pastor must undertake the leadership responsibilities. However, other people in the church should be enlisted to help in the planning. There are cases in which neither

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<sup>1</sup>Heim, op. cit., p. 43-44.

of these persons are qualified to undertake the task because of the lack of training in this area. In such an event a church will have to seek out, through another church or from some educational institution, a well qualified person who can give proper guidance.

A committee planning a program for a workers' conference should be limited to three or four members. This committee should consist of the pastor or director of Christian education, the superintendent and two people at large.

Actually, only a local church can really determine who among its group is best qualified to plan these conferences. To be sure, it should be the most competent person or persons, but it should also be someone who is concerned about the educational advancements of the school. Words of encouragement come through J. Arthur Heck when he says:

No local church should fail to hold workers' conferences for lack of leadership. Surely, someone can be found sufficiently intelligent and interested to help other leaders within the local church to improve their work. Such a person should be used. Even a little help and inspiration is better than none at all.<sup>1</sup>

#### Time to Plan -- Plan Conferences for Entire Year

Three words, "early" and "in advance," best describe how to plan a workers' conference. Workers' conferences should be held once a month, and not less than once every two months. The most logical time for planning conferences is toward the end of the calendar year or sometime previous to the beginning of a church's

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<sup>1</sup>Heck, op. cit., p. 11-12.

conference year.

A Sunday school workers' retreat is becoming an annual affair with many churches who have Sunday school workers' conferences. This retreat has several purposes: (1) fellowship, (2) a morale builder, (3) spiritual refreshment and (4) gaining a vision of the year's work and the responsibility of each worker to that task. A well-conducted retreat is a very inspiring thing. When its meeting is closed with a dedicatory service it leaves an indelible impression with each staff member. Each member senses anew and afresh that this is the Lord's work and that it requires the very best from each worker. Table I suggests a program useable for a workers' conference retreat. Working out a satisfactory program requires much thought and consideration on the part of those responsible for such. The needs that confront the school and the personnel along with the interests of the group should have very careful consideration.

Long range planning is always more favorable than working ahead for a few weeks or one or two months at a time. To work out an entire year's schedule of conferences does not mean that changes cannot be made along the way. It serves as a guide which directs a staff toward a given goal, giving perspective of the overall program.

A conference program may be centered about a theme chosen for the year, emphasizing the theme at each meeting. Seasonal themes may be used to bring out the emphasis of important days during the year. A separate theme may be selected for each month, if so desired. Table II contains an outline of a suggested monthly workers' conference schedule planned for one year.

## TABLE I

## SUGGESTED PROGRAM

## SUNDAY SCHOOL WORKERS' CONFERENCE RETREAT

THEME: LOOKING AT OUR OBJECTIVES

ARRIVING AT CAMP-REGISTRATION	11:00-12:00
DINNER	12:00- 1:00
DEVOTIONAL	1:00- 1:30
TOPIC: LOOKING AT OUR OBJECTIVES by Superintendent	1:30- 2:30
DIVISIONAL OR DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCES	2:30- 3:15
1. Nursery, Beginner and Primary Teachers	
2. Junior, Intermediate and Senior Teachers	
3. Young Adult and Adult Teachers	
4. Sunday School Officers	
REPORTS TO THE GROUP	3:15- 4:00
RE-CREATION	4:00- 5:30
SUPPER	5:30- 6:30
BUSINESS SESSION	6:30- 7:00
SING AND TESTIMONY	7:00- 7:15
FILM: "IN-SERVICE TRAINING"	7:15- 8:00
DEDICATORY SERVICE	8:00- 8:30
DISMISSED	8:30

TABLE II<sup>1</sup>

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE  
OF MONTHLY WORKERS' CONFERENCE  
FOR ONE YEAR

JANUARY

1. Workers' Conference: Everyone is thinking of inventory and resolutions so let's have a discussion concerning the organization, equipment, records, literature, absentees and enlargement. Conclude your discussion with the positive note.
2. Start your second session of Workers' Training classes. Launch the monthly missionary program.
3. Appoint the Daily Vacation Bible School Committee and the Easter program committee.

FEBRUARY

1. Workers' Conference: "The Value and Possibility of a Sunday School Library."
2. Encourage Valentine parties for each age group. Check on Easter program plans. Order supplies for April quarter. Promote workers' training classes.
3. Appoint the spring contest or attendance building program committee. Promote a city or county interdenominational Sunday School conference.

MARCH

1. Workers' Conference: "How to Lead the Sunday School Pupil to Christ."
2. Check on departmental leaders for the DVBS. Order DVBS supplies. Start to build up the Sunday School library. Check on the Week-Day activities. Visit the visitors. Promote or launch attendance building program.
3. Appoint the Family Night program and social committee.
4. Appoint summer camp promotion committee.

APRIL

1. Workers' Conference: "The Teacher's Responsibility to God, the Church and the Pupil."
2. Have the "Family Night" program: every teacher and church member should be there to welcome the parents from the unchurched homes. Plan your program to interest the children and the parents. Be sure to include a devotional by the pastor or teacher of an adult class. Start your staff meetings for DVBS. Easter Program.

3. Make plans for National Christian Family Week, encouraging family altars; Mother's Day; Children's Day and Father's Day.

#### MAY

1. Workers' Conferences: Panel discussion... "Solutions to Discipline Problems."
2. National Family Week, and Mother's Day. Honor the graduates. Check on staff, promotion and program of DVBS. Order supplies for July quarter.
3. Appoint Sunday School picnic committees. Plan now to "Bump the summer slump."
4. Check on summer camp committee.

#### JUNE

1. Workers' Conference: "The Relationship of the Sunday School to Missions".
2. Children's Day and Father's Day. Check on Sunday School picnic plans. Daily Vacation Bible School: . . . urge all Sunday School workers and church members to attend DVBS demonstration program. Everyone should be there to greet the children's parents.
3. Make arrangements to visit every new child contacted through DVBS.

#### JULY

1. Workers' Conference: Plan an outdoor barbecue with a sing-spiration and devotional time.
2. Summer camps. Sunday School picnic. Be sure to greet all visitors at Sunday School and church...many come on vacations as well as many going away for vacations.
3. Organize your fall promotional program.

#### AUGUST

1. Workers' Conference: Discuss and plan a community census. For a novelty have a sketch of your church plant to give to each worker. Then have them list the meeting place of each class giving the age division. If you have a large plant and your workers do not know where others meet you might have a little tour of the building. So many times when visitors ask where to go for class they receive the reply, "I really don't know, I think over here somewhere."
2. Promote your fall promotional program including National Sunday School Week and the first session of your workers' training classes. Order October supplies.
3. Appoint a Sunday School welcoming committee. Appoint Promotion Day and Rally Day committees.

#### SEPTEMBER

1. Workers' Conference: "Visitation...Why? Whom to visit? How?"

2. Start Workers' Training Classes. National Sunday School Week. Promotion Sunday. Start week-day activities. Make sure everyone is ready for the rally in October. Plan to send delegates to the National Sunday School Convention in October. Make a check of your Sunday School record system as well as enrollment.
3. Study the possibilities of having a children's church.

#### OCTOBER

1. Workers' Conference: "Prayer by the Church, Sunday School Staff and Pupils can Increase Sunday School Attendance."
2. Rally Day. Attendance building campaign. Workers' training classes. Conduct a community census.
3. Appoint committees for "Parent-Teacher's Night" and the Christmas program.

#### NOVEMBER

1. Workers' Conference: A message by the pastor: "What is Worship?"
2. Workers' Training classes. Parent-Teacher's Night:... endeavor to reach the unchurched parents. Check on plans for Christmas program; order supplies for January quarter.
3. Appoint Christmas gift committee. Let's give gifts with a Christmas message.

#### DECEMBER

1. Workers' Conference: "The Value of Memory Work in the Sunday School". During departmental session period this evening have a good time wrapping the Christmas gifts. Write the name of the pupil on the gift and package. Keep gifts boxed by classes for easy distribution.
2. Christmas Program. Send a greeting to all workers with a word of appreciation.
3. Prepare your annual missionary budget to be supported by the Sunday School. Also outline your monthly program for the missionary promotion. Promote second session of workers' training classes.

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<sup>1</sup>"Your Monthly Workers' Conference" by Winona Walworth, Associate General Secretary, National Sunday School Association, n.d.

The program for a workers' conference will differ and vary from month to month. The order of the program should never appear the same, neither should the same people be used in every meeting. Variety makes the meetings interesting and the staff is kept expectant as to what will be happening next on the program. The following two types of programs are suggested as a guide for planning this vital portion of the conference.

#### Type A

Fellowship Supper	6:00-6:45
Group Singing	6:45-7:00
Devotional Period	7:00-7:15
Divisional and/or Departmental Meetings	7:15-8:00
Business and Reports	
Speaker, Film, Discussion Period, Etc.	8:00-9:00
Adjournment	9:00

#### Type B

Devotional	7:00-7:20
Divisional or Departmental Conference	7:20-8:00
Program Feature	8:00-8:30
Discussion Period	8:30-9:00
Social Period	9:00-9:30
Dismissal	9:30

To meet the needs of the school and workers alike, there should be a variety of topics available for consideration during the meetings. These may be presented by way of a speaker, panel, forum, demonstration, book review or any number of other ways. The list of topics below is suggested as possible contributions toward making a conference more profitable.

1. How to Prepare a Lesson
2. Use of Visual Aids
3. Methods of Teaching
4. Making Use of Sunday School Records
5. Memory Work in the Sunday School



6. Securing Better Equipment
7. Being a Good Example
8. Discipline Problems
9. Looking at our Objectives
10. Evangelism in Our Sunday School
11. This is The House of God
12. Looking at Our Enrollment
13. Is our Sunday School Properly Graded
14. Let us Look at Our Curriculum
15. What About Our Absentees

Again, may it be emphasized that these examples listed here are only suggestive. They are to serve as a guide in planning the workers' conference. A topic or a program that may be of great importance to one school is perhaps of little concern to another school. As a responsible person or committee works out a program the objective or purpose of the school must definitely be kept in mind. No two churches have like problems, consequently their program will be geared toward the area which needs the most strength.

#### Date, Time and Place of Meetings

As has been previously mentioned, a workers' conference should meet monthly or at least once every two months. When planning for a date, time and place it should be in accord with the rest of the church program. Conflicts must be avoided. Such can be prevented by clearing with the pastor. A church calendar is an excellent tool and if placed where people can see and read about the activities, it will be of much value in avoiding conflicts.

A regular date should be designated such as the first Thursday of each month. When moved from one date to another, confusion reigns. Someone who did not get to the meeting will be sure to say, "I thought we were meeting next week." Another person will say, "well,

I asked Mrs. Jones about our meeting and she said that she thought the conference had been cancelled," when actually this had reference to another meeting. Some churches have scheduled their conferences for Sunday afternoon or evening, because it is a more convenient time to meet. Whatever date is selected it should be adhered to regularly so that there will be no conflicts with workers that are involved in other activities.

The time schedule of a meeting will vary according to the details that have been planned. If a fellowship supper is included in the program, then three hours should be allowed for the evenings activities. Afford plenty of time so that a program need not be rushed. On the other hand, keep the meeting moving along to avoid dead spots.

The choice of meeting place will depend on the size of the group, the type of meeting, and the convenience of location.<sup>1</sup> A group that is not too large may meet in a home around a fire place if such is desirable, or if a beautiful summer evening, a meeting may be held out in the open in a nearby park or by some scenic spot. These places suggest a more personal atmosphere, add variety and create interest. The environment has much significance in creating a proper atmosphere for a conference. The church presents definite advantages over the above mentioned places, as it provides ample space and in most instances equipment. Blackboards, material for

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<sup>1</sup>Verdia Burke, The Workers' Conference (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1955), p. 25.

display and visual aids give ready access when needed. To periodically change the location of a meeting has its advantages.

These three elements, date, time and place have a bearing upon the success of a meeting. People are involved in so many activities both in and out of the church, and those who are busiest generally are called on to do just one more job, thus the scheduling of meetings becomes quite a problem. Always plan a time schedule with the entire personnel in mind. A leader or committee should have a good idea of the work schedules of those concerned. Plan for a time that will include everyone or as near to the 100% mark as possible.

#### Balance and Variety of Meetings

"Why don't people attend our monthly workers' meetings?" says Mr. Discouraged Superintendent.

"For the same reason they don't attend many other meetings they are invited to," answered Mr. Expert. "They are too long, too detailed, and offer little of value that is worth giving their time to."

It doesn't have to be that way. Workers' Conferences can be so interesting and helpful that people can't stay away.<sup>1</sup>

Balance is important to a conference as tendencies will be to specialize in one certain area of interest or need. To become specialists or stereotyped is a danger to be avoided.

Keep changing the order of the program from one meeting to another. It will keep the staff guessing as to what will happen, and it keeps up interest and attention. Not only does the order of

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<sup>1</sup>"The Workers' Conference" by Lawrence F. Swanson, NSSA Sunday School Convention Outlines, n.d. p. 1.

the program need variation, but the main feature or presentation of the program should be varied. The following is a suggestive list of ideas for program variation.

1. Guest Speaker
2. Demonstration
3. Book Review
4. Discussion
5. Visual aids
6. Committee reports
7. Skit
8. Panel
9. Question and answer period
10. Workshop
11. Planning
12. Exhibit of Sunday school materials

#### Different Types of Conferences

Under the workers' conferences come other conferences broken down into specific areas. The size and location of the church will be a determining factor as to the necessity for these conferences to exist. Generally speaking there are four of these conferences:

(1) the general, (2) departmental, (3) organizational, and (4) parental.

The General Conference: The general conference will depend upon the size of the school. A large church consisting of 150 members or more may only have one of these meetings in a year, whereas a small church may use this kind in all of their regular Sunday school meetings. Its purpose is to bring all the responsible persons concerned with the work of the school together in one session. This would include the class officers along with all other workers. A meeting of this kind fosters better relationships not only among the Sunday school workers, but it reaches down into each class. A definite pattern of better teacher-pupil relationship is established.

The Departmental Conference: Where schools are large enough to have more than one department, meetings of the officers and teachers in each can be held. It is here that a more specialized work can be done.<sup>1</sup> Just as the workers' conference, it too will examine and study organization, curriculum, methods and problems that pertain to each individual department. Meetings may be scheduled to suit the workers of the department. Some will have their meetings during the week, on Sunday afternoon or even one half hour before the Sunday school opening service on Sunday morning.

The advantage of having a departmental conference is that each department faces its own problems in its own given situation. Not knowing the problems being faced in the Beginner's Department, the workers from the Primary Department would find difficulty in dealing intelligently with this problem unless it be studied more specifically. A working relationship is fostered between workers of a department that will create a better understanding of each other and the work.

Organizational Conference: A meeting specifically occasioned for officers, this conference considers and discusses problems pertaining to organization. For machinery to operate at full strength, demands the attention and care of those whose responsibility it is to see that it functions properly. Each task has to be understood by its operator and how this task relates to what others are doing.

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<sup>1</sup>Erwin L. Shaver, The Workers' Conference Manual (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1938), p. 46.

Parental Conference: The possibilities that this type of conference presents is most challenging and intriguing. It is a very under-developed area, but what a difference it could make in the development of teacher-pupil relationship if parents could be enlisted in the work of the church.

The Parent-Teachers' Association is working wonderfully well in most secular schools, and thus leading to the question, Why cannot something similar be developed in the Church school? It would do well for all Sunday schools to get the view-point of a parent who has a child in the Sunday school. Areas of strength or weaknesses may be revealed that had never been seen before. Parents who would not be influenced by any other means, may be influenced through the parental conference to come to Sunday school when bringing their children. For parents to bring their children to Sunday school and stay themselves is better than to see them send their children.

### Summary

Formulating a worthwhile workers' conference takes time, effort and careful planning on the part of those workers responsible. The planning must be done in advance setting a date, time and place for each meeting. In outlining a program it is necessary to balance and vary it so the order of the program, the type of presentation and persons in charge will not be the same for each meeting. Variety is the spice of life and it keeps one guessing as to what will happen next.

The workers' conference itself may be broken down into general,

departmental, organizational and parental conferences. Whether these will be emphasized will to certain extent depend upon the size of the church and the number of personnel on the staff.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONDUCTING THE WORKERS' CONFERENCE



## CHAPTER IV

### CONDUCTING THE WORKERS' CONFERENCE

Worship, business, fellowship and education are the four main elements found in the program of a workers' conference. As has been previously stated, a conference that has been well planned has every possibility of being successful. However, the leader or chairman of a meeting has a very important part in determining its success. The way in which he conducts or directs a conference will largely determine its worth and purpose to those for whom it is intended. It is a leader's responsibility to keep the meeting interesting and moving in order to avoid uneasiness and frustration on the part of the personnel. Group participation is necessary and vital, but a leader must discourage any discussion that is fruitless and irrelevant to the point under consideration. On the other hand, a meeting must not be "railroaded" or hurried to the extent that the workers are not clear as to what has been done. Be clear and concise, making sure that as a leader you are familiar with the program and its details. All materials and program essentials must be prepared in advance. This will prevent embarrassment and confusion. The personality, spirit and attitude of the leader will have some relation to his success as a leader, but above all else will be his knowledge of the subject and skill in handling the group and guiding its thinking and procedure.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>J. Arthur Heck, The Workers' Conference (Dayton: The Board of Christian Education of the E. U. B. Church, 1948), p. 17.

### Worship

The chairman or leader in charge of the conference will arrange for the devotional period. The participants are notified far enough in advance so adequate preparation may be made. The leader may appoint a committee to prepare the devotional for each meeting. Get as many people on the staff as is possible, active and participating in the program itself. The worship period may be centered about a theme. If a workers' conference has selected a theme for the year or even on a monthly basis, the worship may be planned accordingly.

Worship is needed as a strengthening and vitalizing element of every workers' conference. A group that is conscious of God's guidance can do better work.<sup>1</sup> The experiences gained through worship in the workers' meeting will carry over into the devotional part of the Sunday school opening. In many churches the opening part of the Sunday school hour is referred to as "opening exercises," which has become a rather trite phrase. Call it a "devotional," "opening worship" or some term synonymous with these, but do not use a term that is meaningless and insignificant. Whether at the conference or in the actual Sunday school work, worship should denote the idea of singing, scripture reading, prayer and other related elements, purposing to bring the self in contact with God. From the experience of worship the group is also unified and strengthened in its purpose

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<sup>1</sup>Verdie Burke, The Workers' Conference (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1956), p. 29.

to carry out plans.<sup>1</sup> Verdía Burke further notes:

Too often, however, worship at the conference does not have these desired results. Workers do not have a real experience of worship. In evaluating their past year's conferences members of one group spoke of the worship mostly in such terms as these: "a mechanical routine", "something to get over with"; "stereotyped"; "too long"; "a performance, not an experience." "It did not reach me where I live" was the original way one person expressed it.

On the other hand workers made such comments as these about programs that had been helpful: "God seemed right there"; "made me aware of God's love and guidance"; "felt grateful for the privilege of working for him through teaching in the church school"; "felt united with my fellow-workers in a great task"; "made me want to do my best."<sup>2</sup>

How can a conference maintain a worship that is both meaningful and helpful? Every effort should be made to provide conditions conducive to worship. The physical surroundings, the leadership and length of the devotional are factors involved in making this segment of the conference meaningful and beneficial to the group.

As the environment in which a person lives has a definite effect upon his personality, so the environs of a meeting place has its effect upon the individual. The room does not have to be lavishly adorned with cushioned seats, wool rug, glass chandelier and a galaxy of pictures to make surroundings pleasant. The things important in making a room conducive to worship is that it be clean, orderly, pleasantly decorated and furnished, and that the meeting room be of appropriate size to accommodate the group. These features will aid in creating a sense of fellowship and unity in worship. When it is necessary to meet in a large place, unite the group by

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 29-30.

sitting close together yet allowing enough room to be comfortable.

A picture of Christ hung on the wall, an open Bible on a table or a bouquet of flowers adds to the devotional atmosphere as it directs one's thoughts toward God.

Not only is variety necessary in the planning of the program for a conference, but variation is also important in conducting the meeting. Falling into a "fixed pattern" is easy to do, and in doing so no contribution is made in way of appeal and influence. Different hymns can be sung familiar to the group. Using a different version of the Bible when reading scriptures can be used effectively. Prayer can be offered in different forms. A poem, story, special music or a brief devotional may be used at different meetings. The worship part of a service need not and should not be conducted in the same manner at each meeting.

At least once every year a program should be conducted on "worship." Workers need help in understanding the meaning and value of worship. The subject can be discussed during a meeting bringing out the nature of worship, its essential place in religion, principles to remember in producing worship and materials available on worship. A study of this kind should stimulate workers for further searching in this area.

A real sense of fellowship with God is basic to every vital Christian life.<sup>1</sup> Especially those who would teach others this way of life should know how to worship in spirit and in truth.<sup>2</sup> Guy P.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Leavitt notes that the devotional feature of the workers' conference has a four-fold purpose as follows:

- (1) To recognize God's presence and guidance;
- (2) To bring the spirit of worship into the conference;
- (3) To train the workers in expression of spiritual aspirations, and
- (4) To prepare the hearts and minds of those present to receive the largest possible help from the session.<sup>1</sup>

### Business

This item called "business" has been noted for KILLING more workers' conferences than any other element in its program. Discussing and relating insignificant details are a waste of time and must be eliminated. A business meeting lasting an hour or two, and the author can recall business sessions lasting longer than two hours, is just too long! Following the business session a presentation on how to prepare a lesson is scheduled to take place, but by now everyone is tired and not mentally prepared to give their utmost attention. Because of the time factor involved the presentation is hurried and undone. When opportunity is given for questions at the close, no one responds and the leader wonders why. The answer is obvious when the length of time that it took for the business is considered.

The above statements make it sound as if there is no place for business in a workers' conference. Actually this is not so, but much of this business can be cared for before the meeting of the conference. An executive committee composed of the Chairman, Vice

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<sup>1</sup>Guy P. Leavitt, How To Conduct the Workers' Conference (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1953), p. 16.

Chairman, Secretary -- and if there are a program and a social chairman they too are included in this committee -- should care for the details related to the business sessions. Where there is no Christian Education Committee, the executive committee should have the authority to handle all the routine business of the Church school. Business that needs attention from the staff should be brought in the form of a recommendation.

In conducting the business portion of a meeting the leader plays an important role. It is up to him to keep discussions from getting out of hand. The greatest difficulty in wandering is that many times the discussions do not get back to the original starting point.

The chairman should know how to conduct business with efficiency. A knowledge of parliamentary procedure is a real asset to the leader in conducting business. The sad part of many business meetings is that there is little if any advanced planning, thus creating an order of business that is both confused and time consuming. Invaluable moments can be wasted when a chairman does not know what to do next. Some leaders are satisfied to get a meeting underway and hope they can stumble through the remainder of the session.

Robert's Rules of Order are usually followed in business meetings. To transact the business according to the proper parliamentary procedure not only saves time but demonstrates the importance of conducting the meeting in an orderly and efficient manner.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Burke, op. cit., p. 37.

Minutes of important proceedings of each meeting should be kept. It becomes the duty of the secretary to inform the chairman of any unfinished business or other item of importance to the conference.

Reports are necessary. It is through this means that insight is gained as to the progress being made in the Sunday school. Statistical data concerning attendance and offerings is valuable in planning for improvement in the school. These reports will have a greater effect upon the group if some visual aid is used such as a blackboard, chart or diagram to portray what has been accomplished. These aids should be constructed so as to be readable and understandable.

Persons having attended a workers' convention or institute should bring back suggestions helpful to the group. Visiting other schools will bring new ideas to present to the local group. Committee reports should be given when necessary. In order to do a more effective work, the corp of workers should have the opportunity of being informed. They need to know about the latest developments vital to their area of work. Reports should always be as brief as possible and to the point.

The business period can be an important and helpful part of the conference.<sup>1</sup> If carefully planned and skillfully conducted it need not consume a disproportionate amount of time.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Burke, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

### Fellowship

The social aspect of a workers' conference provides an opportunity for the personnel to become better acquainted with each other. Each conference should provide a period of fellowship. Quite often this is done by having a fellowship-supper preceding the meeting or else have a social period after the last activity on the program. to some this will seem like a waste of time, but its worthiness should be tested before passing judgment. Informal fellowship has its values. In getting to really know each other, means a better understanding of one another creating a greater sense of harmony and togetherness.

To become really acquainted means that people understand each other better and can work together in greater harmony. With understanding and appreciation of fellow-workers comes a sense of comradeship and group solidarity. Confidence and good will are developed. Individual workers receive the encouragement and strength that comes from group approval and support.

Enjoyable fellowship creates greater interest in the conference and loyalty to it. People naturally desire to repeat experiences that bring satisfaction and pleasure. Attendance is better . . .

A spirit of happy fellow-ship means heightened morale. This makes for better teaching. Workers approach their tasks with greater enthusiasm and devotion. The final results are registered in the lives of pupils.<sup>1</sup>

One needs to stop and take time for fellowship, as we are living in a day when some people do not even know their neighbor across the street. This is not true so much of rural areas, but is prevalent in the larger cities.

The social committee who is responsible for the fellowship period of the conference needs to emphasize the importance of to-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 42-43.



getherness. Special meetings for the purpose of fellowship may be held throughout the year. A banquet is sometimes planned for the entire staff at the beginning or end of the year. Some like to schedule such an occasion for a special day such as New Years, Valentines, St. Patricks Day, Halloween or Fourth of July. To have a special fellowship dinner on one of these days makes planning relatively easy as the theme is already determined. The summer months will provide for an enjoyable time outdoors by having a picnic.

Fellowship is a vital part of the workers' conference for it helps build the morale of the group. It fosters good relationships toward one another and the work. Problems are easier to solve with this type of harmony. This part of the conference should be made as enjoyable and rich as one knows how. It will accomplish much in making the meeting a greater success.

### Education

This is a segment of the conference which converts it into a training center. The educational feature may be determined by the theme, if one has been chosen for the entire year, or for the month. This portion of the program helps teachers and officers become better equipped for the task which is theirs. It should definitely make them better leaders; if it does not do this, than the conference has a definite weakness. Worship, business and fellowship are all essential to a conference but the primary function of a workers' meeting is the educational aspect.

A program featuring this portion of the meeting may be planned in advance as the year's schedule is prepared, yet it may not be

meeting its purpose because of last minute preparations. Those who are to have a part should know several weeks in advance, so plenty of time can be had for preparation. Each meeting provides opportunity for announcing what will be the main feature at the following meeting. If the participants are from one's own group for the following conference, they can be notified at this meeting. If an outside speaker is being engaged, a call or a letter, giving a friendly reminder, stating that his presence is much desired, will help.

As in the other segments of the program, the leader is the key man. He must keep it interesting and whatever type of presentation is used, it should be helpful to the workers. After a presentation opportunity ought to be given for group discussion. Suggestions may come from the group that may be very helpful in determining the final outcome of a meeting. During the discussion, an important thing the leader must keep in mind is to guard against the person or persons that monopolize too much of the time; neither should the discussion be led astray from the main point. At the conclusion of a discussion period the leader should be able to bring together some final points that are concrete and of value to the workers. The benefits derived through these discussion periods should result in a more effective teaching ministry of the school.

A leader's responsibility can be tremendously lightened by supplying materials that will be a definite aid in planning for a workers' conference. One's own denomination will be glad to send materials, and if the denomination does not have materials available in this area, there are publishing houses both denominational

and inter-denominational that will be happy to supply the need. Religious magazines and periodicals published by different churches have sections that are devoted to the workers' conference. Two examples are: (1) "The Sunday School Journal," published by the Free Methodist Church, which devotes a section to the workers' conference; and (2) "Church School Worker," published by the Board of Christian Education of the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

Workers should constantly be made aware of publications that are available. Their value and use is strengthened when a pastor, superintendent or Christian education director explain how these materials may be used. By this means inexperienced leaders may learn and benefit from these sources.

Various types of presentations may be made for the educational part of the program, but these will not be listed in this chapter as this matter along with the suggested list of topics used for a program received attention in Chapter III.

### Summary

In conducting a workers' conference four elements have been noted that make up a program; worship, business, fellowship and education. In each one of these the leader has an important responsibility, as the success of the conference depends upon his ability to direct the workers in each of these elements. As important as each element is, the educational feature is the most important segment. It is a training center through which its ultimate results will not only show up in the teachers and officers, but finally in the pupils of the school and their home.

## CHAPTER V

### PRACTICAL POINTS OF PROCEDURE FOR EVERY WORKERS' CONFERENCE

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An area of study is now being entered that calls for a plan of self-improvement on the part of the conference and every worker that is concerned with this conference. The life and personality of a Sunday school teacher and officer is an important medium in influencing Christian development of those whom he instructs, but while he is trying to improve teaching techniques he should also work toward self-improvement. The question is, is he willing to pay the price that it takes to make the conference a successful agency? The things that are carried on in the workers' conference will have a definite effect upon the staff, and in turn these workers will make an imprint upon the whole school and its pupils. Instruction is necessary, but a good example of the worker's life is more important. Like in so many areas of life the worker will get out of the conference only as much as he is willing to put into it. By not being an active participant one will be the loser. Putting the best effort into it will make the worker a beneficiary of rich and rewarding experiences.

#### Prepared Programs

In the previous two chapters this point was referred to, but its importance cannot be over-emphasized. In preparing the program for a workers' conference, the chairman's responsibility is more than putting an order of service on a piece of paper. There must be advance thinking and planning according to the needs, problems

and interests of both personnel and school. The leader of the conference will need to work in conjunction with the chairman of each committee, so that a well co-ordinated program can be planned and readied before the meeting of the conference. People who are delegated to be responsible for the different portions of the program should receive a friendly reminder at least one week prior to the meeting. The date, time and place should be stated in this reminder.

The ingredients of a "crazy cake" can be mixed together all in the same bowl in a few seconds time; and when baked at the right temperature will turn out to be a lovely cake. But a worthwhile program for a workers' conference can not be thrown together in a few minutes time. However, let us face it, many programs are last minute preparations thrown together with no sense of direction or objective in mind! When staff members will not come to the conferences the chairman wonders why? No "hit or miss" last minute effort will accomplish its purpose. The program thoroughly prepared in advance will bring fruitful results through the workers attending the meeting. These results will stimulate the pupils in the school and eventually show its effect within the home.

#### Publicity Promoted

There was a time when only two means of publicity were available, (1) word of mouth, and (2) handwriting. Today these means have been immeasurably multiplied. Some of the methods of modern publicity may be questionable and even rejected, but the main purpose of church promotion is to make known a worthwhile value being offered.

"All worthwhile publicity has three objectives: to attract attention, to develop interest, and to effect decision and action."<sup>1</sup>

Publicity as a means of promotion is an excellent means for securing attendance at a workers' conference. Making promotion materials appealing and attractive creates interest and motivates workers to action. A conference needs more in attendance than the "faithful few;" it needs everyone. Workers must be encouraged to come and they must be made to feel that they are important and that they are being the loser if not in attendance. Workers should be made to feel that attending a conference is a privilege rather than a duty!

A program calendar can be a very valuable instrument and serves as an excellent reminder. It should contain pertinent information as to the date and time, place, leader in charge and the theme of the conference for each month. This calendar should be placed on a bulletin board or some conspicuous location where each staff member may see it as he comes into the church building.

Postcards are easy to use and the cost is reasonable. Through the means of duplicating devices, illustrations or cartoons may be used as an "eye catcher." A personal letter sent out by the leader will be of interest as it will make the individual worker feel that he is a vital part of the organization. Posters have been used to great advantage and serve as good "attention getters" because of their size and color.

One of the handiest instruments for advertising purposes is

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<sup>1</sup>G. S. Dobbins, The Church Book (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1951), p. 217.

the telephone. It is a time-saving device and has a message that is personal.

Church bulletins are used for promotional causes, and generally speaking most people who attend the church services will read them. Although announcements in the bulletin are for the purpose of saving time at the worship service, the pastor quite often reads each announcement. If this is the case than every worker present for the worship service on Sunday morning or evening should be aware of the notice about the workers' conference.

A friendly personal reminder by the leader or some older staff member after one of the church services may mean more to a worker than any one type of announcement. Personal invitations when used are most effective and helpful in securing the attendance of those who need it most.

Other modes of advertising could be described, but suffice it to mention a few, some of which are described above:

1. Program calendar - monthly
2. Bulletin board
3. Postcards and letters
4. Newspaper
5. Telephone
6. Church bulletin
7. Blackboard
8. Posters
9. Oral announcements from pulpit
10. Announcement at preceding workers' conference

When planning the year's program for the workers' conference, one night should be set aside for the purpose of devoting the time to a study of "promotion through advertising." A committee can be made responsible to find out what promotional material is available



for church use. From these materials should come a selection of ideas and source materials which will be suitable to the situation for which it will be intended. Church advertising that is simple, clear and neat will meet the approval of the public eye. A church having something worthwhile to offer should not shy away from the idea of using some means of advertising. To effectively advertise, a church need not print one line in a newspaper, church bulletin, letter or on a postcard. The people that come through the doors of the church will be the medium through which most of the advertising will be done. It could be positive or negative! If one has something worthwhile to present at a workers' conference then let the staff know about it. A conference that has much food for thought and can easily be digested by its workers will soon advertise itself.

#### Perfect Promptness

It is a disturbing thing to see Sunday school pupils wander into the opening part of the service after it has been in progress for ten or fifteen minutes. The officers and teachers ask, why are they late? Is it because they do not get up early enough? Is the distance between home and the church too far? Or is it because they have been observing their teacher who never gets to the school on time?

Who would be brave enough to even venture a guess at how many pupils come on time and are in their seats when the first hymn of the Sunday school is announced. The percentage might be somewhat appalling. An hour or an hour and a quarter is all the time that a pupil

spends in Sunday school each week, and when fifteen minutes are lost, a good portion of golden opportunity is wasted. As a teacher or an officer you cannot blame Timmie or Susie for coming late to Sunday school if the teacher is late.

The workers' conference should start on time at each meeting. A meeting scheduled for 7:00 P.M. does not start at 6:59 or 7:01, but at 7:00 P.M. as announced. Waiting for one or two persons is not worth the waiting. It robs those workers who have made a special effort to be there when the meeting begins of valuable time. A leader setting a good example of being on time and starting the meeting on time, will gain the respect of his workers at this point. They will become good imitators. R. D. Heim says, the attainment of a punctuality goal depends first upon the earnestness with which the workers themselves accept the responsibility.<sup>1</sup> Each person is important to the conference and to the school. All workers ought to be punctual. A good motto for a conference and its workers is, "Be on time, begin on time and close on time."

#### Personal Preparedness

A worker must be prepared physically, mentally and spiritually. A preacher can not give his best on a Sunday morning unless he has had time to prepare himself through a time of relaxation, meditation and prayer. A worker desiring to contribute something to the conference as well as take something must be prepared. A person

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<sup>1</sup>R. D. Heim, Leading A Sunday Church School (Philadelphia: The Mulenberg Press, 1950), p. 156.

may be physically tired from a hard day's work, but the thought of attending a conference may either relax or make him feel distressed depending upon the success of previous conferences. The workers' conference that has been educating and training its workers in the areas pertinent to their position will not have any difficulty in securing their presence even when tired in body. Such a situation will make the conference a period of relaxing and drinking in of helpful ideas.

Mental preparation is important on the part of every worker. An alert person will take note of information that applies to his particular need or problem, whether personal, related to a class or the school. Each person should be prepared to give helpful information to others if the occasion calls for such contributions.

Spiritual preparation is of utmost importance on the part of every worker. The workers' conference is not just another meeting. It represents the Lord's work and should be recognized as such. Time spent in private devotion and prayer by each worker in preparation for the conference, will create a spiritual atmosphere that is most vital. Where the presence of God is felt there is a oneness of heart and mind. It is not through human strength and power that a Sunday school sees fruit for its labour, but all things are accomplished through Christ.

#### Personal Participation

One of the real purposes of a workers' conference is to develop the "conference" idea, so that every worker will feel free to take

part. Too many times a discussion will be dominated by "the few" and the others are good listeners. Do not misunderstand, there is a time for listening and giving attention, but in order to discover the needs and problems of the workers and the school there must be a sharing of ideas. Individual participation will show a personal interest in the problems faced by fellow-workers. Of course, it is realized that workers cannot show initiative unless they have opportunity. A good leader will give opportunity to everyone who wishes to speak, but at the same time care should be taken not to let any person dominate the discussion. When workers take the advantage of sharing, than the conference together with the work its staff is doing becomes a co-operative enterprise.

### Prevailing Prayer

Although this item appears last in this chapter it is not least in importance.

Whatever we do to help build a good Sunday school must be energized by prayer and faith. Because the Sunday school plays such a vital part in the total evangelistic outreach of our churches we can be assured that God is definitely interested in whatever we do to make our ministry more effective.<sup>1</sup>

First of all prayer ought to be for those in the school who are unsaved. Each teacher should take it upon his heart to pray specifically for those in his class who have not accepted Christ as their Savior. In the class where small children are being taught, but are too young to know what it means to accept Christ, a teacher

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<sup>1</sup>R. S. Nelson, "Here's the Answer", Winona Lake, Indiana: Department of Sunday Schools, Free Methodist Headquarters, n.d.).

should pray that he will give proper instruction preparing them for the classes to follow. Every Sunday school should be an evangelistic center where boys and girls will come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. The Sunday school is the best medium for reaching the unsaved. The boys and girls are our church now, but they need to be kept so there will be a church tomorrow.

Teachers and officers should pray for one another that there may be a continuous spiritual growth. The life of every worker should be a living testimony that will tell and count for Jesus. The instruction and in particular the example of every worker will make an impression that is either good, bad or indifferent upon the pupils for whom it is meant. In dealing with lives whose destiny may be dependent upon a teacher's witness, one needs to seek the wisdom and understanding of God.

The administration of the school is important for it is the medium by which the school is kept in force. Those persons concerned with this phase of the work need the prayers and support of the entire school. The squeaks need oiling, worn parts need repair or replacement and new tools need to be added, to make the entire machine run smoothly and efficiently.

Many parents send their children to Sunday school but forget to bring themselves. These homes need the prayers of the Sunday school workers. Children receiving instruction through their teacher will very often bring comments home to the parents in reference to what they learned in Sunday school. God can make teachers a special channel of blessing through the youngsters they teach. Prayer should

be made that these children will have a definite influence upon their unsaved parents.

The church and its entire program needs the prayers of every Christian. A church breaks down into many component parts but each is related to the church whole. There is an inter-relatedness between all the organizations of the church. The workers' conference is not a separate entity set over in a corner by itself. True, it is chiefly concerned with the Church school, its problems, interests and needs, but as it deals with these concerns it has an effect on the entire church. If a conference only fulfilled its desires in name, then the purpose for its existence would have fallen far short of the mark.

The importance of prayer in a workers' conference for the school can not be over-emphasized. The school that is backed by prevailing prayer will note changes in the lives of the pupils who enter its doors. Eternal values are accomplished.

#### Summary

Self-improvement on the part of individual workers and the workers' conference itself, is the key factor involved in each point discussed in this chapter. The practical points of procedure considered in this section, prepared programs, publicity, promptness, personal preparedness, personal participation, and prevailing prayer, are points vitally important to the conference. Each worker is involved in making a conference what it ought to be, and without the participation and co-operation of each member, it cannot fully achieve

its purpose. The unselfish motive and desire on the part of the leader and personnel melts a corps of workers together in love and harmony.

CHAPTER VI  
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS



## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Summary

The investigation of this study was devoted to the workers' conference and its various aspects as they relate to the work of the Sunday school. It was noted that the work of the Sunday school is primarily maintained by laymen who voluntarily give of their time and effort for the cause of Christ and the church. Many of these laymen have had no Christian educational training, thus out of the goodness of their hearts and lives they have done the very best they know how. For a Sunday school to realize its full potential and mission it was established that there is a need for in-service training. With this need for workers' training evident, the workers' conference can be better understood.

The element so vitally important to a workers' conference is its purpose. A conference that is purposeful is one in which definite outcome is expected in terms of a change within the local school.

Well planned conferences do not happen by co-incidence. Formulating a worthwhile conference requires time, effort and careful planning.

In conducting a workers' conference four elements were noted that make up a program; worship, business, fellowship and education. The leader has a very important and vital relationship to these elements, for the success or failure of a conference depends upon his ability to direct the workers in these segments of a conference.

Practical points of procedure were considered concerning

prepared programs, publicity, promptness, personal preparedness, personal participation and prevailing prayer. As in other areas of life an individual can only get out of an organization what he puts into it. This portion of the study was considered as an area of self-improvement on the part of every worker concerned with the conference. Each worker is involved in making a conference what it ought to be, and without the participation and co-operation of each member the conference cannot fully achieve its purpose. Through the unselfish motives and desires of the leader and personnel a corps of workers is melted together in love and harmony.

### Conclusions

From the foregoing research the following conclusions were stated:

- (1) The Sunday school personnel needs an on-going or continuing program of in-service training.
- (2) There are many churches which do not provide satisfactory means of in-service training for their workers.
- (3) The workers' conference is the most common, but it is the most profitable technique for training Sunday school personnel.
- (4) The success or failure of a workers' conference depends upon its defined purpose.
- (5) Careful consideration must be given to the organization and planning of a workers' conference.
- (6) The leader of the workers' conference through his capability of directing the conference will determine to a large degree the success or failure of this agency.

(7) Of the four elements included in a workers' conference, the educational feature is the most important. This is true since this segment of the conference makes it into a training center.

(8) The workers' conference will be successful to the same degree that each individual worker co-operates with the specific purpose and goals of the conference.

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## APPENDIX

A STANDARD FOR MEASURING  
WORKERS' CONFERENCES<sup>1</sup>

I. OBJECTIVES (10)

Are the purposes of the conference definitely centered upon improvement of the education program of the Church? (5)

Are the objectives clearly stated? (2)

Are they made evident in the planning and conducting of the conference? (3)

Total for "Objectives" -----

II. PLANNING (10)

Is the conference planned by a responsible committee? (2)

Are the plans adapted to the interest and ability level of the workers? (2)

Are departmental and general needs both met by the plans? (2)

Are the plans made a sufficient time in advance? (2)

Are the plans given early and adequate announcement? (2)

Total for "Planning" -----

III. SETTING (10)

Is the meeting held in comfortable and attractive surroundings? (4)

Are all equipment details cared for? (3)

Is a setting specially appropriate to the particular subject or purpose provided? (3)

Total for "Objectives" -----

IV. ATTENDANCE (10)

Are all the workers in attendance? (10)

(Compute on proportion of workers present) -----

V. LENGTH (10)

Two hours are suggested as standard. Compute time given to sociability and eating on a 50 per cent basis, for example, one hour supper or social period plus one hour work would count as one and one half hours. (10) -----

VI. LEADERSHIP (10)

Is a leader provided for the meeting? (2)

Does he carry out the purpose of the plans as made? (2)

Does he guide the discussion well? (2)

Does he lead the conference from discussion to action? (2)

Does he develop a spirit of fellowship and inspiration? (2)

Total for "Leadership" -----

## VII. RESOURCES (10)

Are resource persons provided for the conference? (2)  
 Are they used to the fullest extent? (3)  
 Are material resources provided? (2)  
 Are they used effectively? (3)  
 Total for "Resources" -----

## VIII. CONTENT (10)

Is fellowship provided for? (2)  
 Are inspiration and encouragement given? (2)  
 Is helpful information given? (2)  
 Is work done (are improvement plans made?) (4)  
 Total for "Content" -----

## IX. QUALITY (10)

Is the conference interesting? (2)  
 Is there good participation by the members? (2)  
 Is singleness of purpose evident? (2)  
 Is there an "esprit de corps"? (2)  
 Is there a spirit of loyalty and consecration to the task? (2)  
 Total for "Quality" -----

## X. OUTCOMES (10)

Are improvements in the educational program brought about? (5)  
 Have the workers grown in consecration and skill? (5)  
 Total for "Outcomes" -----

Grand Total (for a single conference) -----

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<sup>1</sup>Erwin L. Shaver, The Workers' Conference Manual (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1938), p. 60-62.