

G.R.W.C. AND THE GRASSROOTS

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ABSTRACT

Many of the pressing problems facing America today can only be hoped to be solved by utilizing a regional approach. Regionalism, unlike the traditional forms of American state and local government is more often than not, voluntary in its nature. The success of regional governments like planning units, multistage compacts, councils of government and watershed councils depends not so much on binding ordinances and statutes as it does upon the members dedication and perception of success.

This article is designed to identify those attitudinal and behavioral factors which could enhance a voluntary organizations possibility of attaining their goals. The organization to be studied is the Grand River Watershed Council.

VOLUNTARY REGIONALISM

Regionalism is fast becoming an accomplished fact in America—on paper. Planning units, councils of government, multi-state compacts, and watershed councils: associations such as these have been created in all parts of the nation. However, the success of regional associations has not yet become an accomplished fact. Rather their success remains as a great potential in the American polity. Success in voluntary organizations whether consisting of private or public entities, depends upon many things. Included are the willingness of members to participate and give their energies to the organization, the willingness of members to integrate the goals of the organization with their personal goals, the desires of the members to see the organization be successful, and the confidence the members have in the eventual success of the organization.

Several studies of organizations have interpreted the willingness of members to manifest these positive behaviors to be an economic function [1-3]. That is, members will give desirable behaviors in exchange for things of positive value to them. For instance, James W. Davis writes:

Members of an organization sell their efforts, their skill, their knowledge, their loyalty to the organization that employs them in exchange for things they want or value. Most obviously, of course, members of an organization work for wages. But this may not be all the compensation or reward they want. They may also want free time, lax rule enforcement, housing, pleasant working conditions, or a number of other things. Whether job seekers take a job and keep it is determined in large part by whether it appears to offer them what they want and whether they are willing to give (and can) what the job requires [1, pp. 139-140].

The notion of exchange highlights the difficulty faced by voluntary organizations. Unlike the typical organization described by Davis, the voluntary organization is handicapped in that it must gain loyalty and willingness to contribute in exchange milieu which do not involve wage incentives. Moreover, a constant threat to the budgets of most voluntary organizations removes any kind of financial reward from the picture.

Further, the loyalty to voluntary organizations such as inter-governmental organizations involves at least a partial commitment to innovation and change. A number of organizational theorists have sought to identify characteristics of organizations that are associated with innovative attitudes. Richard Cyert and James March in their classic, *A Behavioral Theory of the Firm* suggest that financial resources are essential to the acceptance of new approaches [4]. They feel that experimentation which accompanies innovation can be afforded only by those organizations with surplus resources. On the other hand, Anthony Downs in his *Inside Bureaucracy* feels that the newer less-financially secure organization, the organization that has yet to reach its "survival threshold," is more likely to be innovative because its members have less of a stake in the status quo [5]. On the other hand, the effectiveness of communications networks in organizations has been theorized as the key factor in the adoption of new perspectives on policy [6].

Two scholars of public administration, Chester Barnard and Philip Selznick recognize explicitly that the members of organizations operate with a power base [7-9]. They conform to desires for action whether innovative or otherwise only if that action respects their position within the organization. Barnard

refers to members' "zones of indifference," while Selznick sees a selective recruitment mechanism that he labels "cooptation" as the key to change.

This study is designed to identify those factors which are associated with positive attitudinal and behavioral contributions by members to a voluntary organization composed of members representing units of government. The organization is the Grand River Watershed Council. The identification of these factors serves to highlight the veracity of several theoretical notions alluded to above. The pattern of associations is given special meaning when viewed in the context of Selznick's cooptation model.

Problems of pollution, shoreline planning and preservation of American lakes and streams can be solved only if there is a vast amount of cooperation between many units and levels of government. Pollution in streams and rivers does not respect governmental borders. Abatement of deleterious contaminants in one body of water adjacent to or within one governmental unit's jurisdiction is quite often a futile jesture when other nearby units of government permit a continuation of activities which result in the pollution of the same body of water.

THE GRAND RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

The Grand River Watershed Council was created in 1966 for the manifest purpose of coordinating water management programs of the many local governmental units which exercise jurisdiction within the watershed of the Grand River of Michigan. The watershed area has a population of nearly two million people. The flow of the River constitutes the largest natural flow of water into Lake Michigan. The activities of a council overseeing the management of programs for such a watershed can be easily seen as being of great potential importance.

The G.R.W.C. was established under the authority of the Michigan Local River Management Act of 1964. Sixty-five units of government were eligible for membership on the council. Forty had actively participated in the council as of early 1975. Representation was by appointment of the local units of government on a modified population representation formula. Fifty-eight members serve on the council. The council has almost no direct authority to deal with pollution abatement of waters within the jurisdiction of the local government units. All compliance with council activities must be voluntary. All participation in council activity is essentially voluntary. There is no compensation for service. Any expenses

incurred in the course of service are paid for directly by the council members or by their own units of government. The Council has absolutely no taxing authority.

The objectives of the Grand River Watershed Council are:

1. To foster intergovernmental relationships in the Grand River Basin for planning and carrying out coordinated water management programs;
2. to assist local governmental units in planning and carrying out a coordinated water management program;
3. to correlate local goals with regional objectives in water and related land management programs for serving the needs of present and future generations;
4. to provide local units of government assistance and guidance for development of effective regional management of water and land resources;
5. to stimulate public involvement, correlate intergovernmental relationships and foster regional management of the natural resources in the Grand River Basin.

While the emphasis of the G.R.W.C. is upon locally administered programs consistent with proper river management, the Council has itself undertaken some direct activity. Three programs entail at least a modest degree of implementation by the Council.

In 1968 a stream monitoring program was initiated. The purpose of the program is to collect, analyze and store water quality data concerning the Grand River and its tributaries. Seventeen units of local government participate in the funding of the operation of over 100 water testing stations. Tests, however, are made only about once a month. For this reason, the National Sanitation Foundation has considered the program to be of minimal impact. Its future value is very much dependent upon a greater level of participation both in funding and in unit cooperation by the governments which belong to the G.R.W.C.

In 1969, a soil erosion and sedimentation control program was instituted. The Council established a Technical Advisory Council (T.A.C.). The T.A.C. developed a model soil and erosion control resolution for adoption by the local governments. Local governments which adopt the resolution also may seek the direct technical assistance from the T.A.C. The T.A.C. also successfully lobbied in the state government for the adoption of a state soil erosion and sedimentation act.

In 1971 the G.R.W.C. completed the first of several studies on flood plain conditions in the Grand River Basin. The flood plain

studies have been funded through federal grants. The studies indicate to the local units of government the particular kinds of development and land usage near the river which is compatible with the greater public interest.

While the emphasis of the G.R.W.C. is to get its member units into action, it too does act. But whether the G.R.W.C. serves as a catalyst for others or as a direct doer, it needs the help of its membership. It needs funding, it needs political support, it needs a confidence of the membership which can be translated into voluntary compliance by member governmental units. The help cannot be forthcoming unless the membership of the G.R.W.C. itself are favorably disposed toward its efforts.

A SURVEY OF PERCEPTIONS OF SUCCESS

To gain an understanding of the membership's attitudes toward the G.R.W.C., a survey was made of the fifty-eight members. Both oral and written interviews were completed by twenty-nine or exactly one-half of the Council members. This study reports the results of those surveys.

Thirteen questions were directed to the Council members in order to discern their attitudes. The responses were scored and tabulated into three indices: an index of perceptions of effectiveness, an index of perception of local impact, and an index of awareness. The three indices were combined to form a perception of success index.

A score of seven was possible for the effectiveness index. Four questions were asked: How effective do you think the G.R.W.C. is as an organization? (Answers to all questions were closed ended. For this question answers were scored from 0 to 3.) How would you rate communication within the G.R.W.C.? (0-3.) Is enforcement of programs the major problem of the G.R.W.C.? Is cooperation of membership the major problem? (0-1; one point if both answers are negative.)

A score of seven was also possible on the local impact index. Five questions were asked: Was either finance or no motivation the major problem of the G.R.W.C.? (0-1.) Do you feel there is adequate representation from your area on the G.R.W.C.? (0-1.) Do you see the programs or goals of the G.R.W.C. as being in conflict with any of your individual community goals or programs? (0-1.) Could your local government put the money it gives the G.R.W.C. to a better use? (0-1.) How beneficial to your local community is its participation in the G.R.W.C.? (0-3.)

A score of twelve was possible on the awareness index. The respondents were asked how aware they were of the stream monitoring program, the flood plain control program, and the erosion sedimentation control program. Each response was scored from zero to three. Respondents were also asked about their awareness of a fictitious fish planting implementation program. We made this inquiry as a validity check on awareness responses. Three points were given to those expressing no awareness of the fictitious program, while negative points were assigned to those aware of the fish planting implementation program.

The perception of success index had a total possible score of forty points. The effectiveness and local impact scores were each doubled and then added to the awareness score. Each of the three indices was therefore treated approximately equal in the total index.

The perception of success index had the total possible score of forty. One respondent scored a thirty-six. Four others scored thirty-four. Overall thirteen, or 45 per cent of the twenty-nine respondents scored index values of twenty-five or higher. Sixteen scored twenty-three or lower. In the analysis of this overall factor, those with a score of twenty-five or above were considered to have a high perception of the success of the G.R.W.C.

On the perception of awareness index, nine members scored twelve, two ten, and the other eighteen respondents scored seven or below. The eleven or 38 per cent scoring twelve or ten were considered to be the most aware of the Council's activities and programs. The remaining eighteen or 62 per cent of the respondents were considered the least aware of the Council's undertakings.

On the perception of local impact index, seven scored five, thirteen scored four, four scored three, and five scored two or less. The twenty or 69 per cent scoring four or five were considered to be the respondents who viewed the G.R.W.C. as having a good local impact, the nine below (31%) were considered to be the ones feeling the local impact of the Council was less than positive.

On the perception of effectiveness index, only one respondent scored seven. Four others scored six, and six others five. Eleven scored four, and the remaining five scored three or less. The twelve, or 41 per cent who scored five or above were considered to view the G.R.W.C. as an effective organization, while the seventeen or 59 per cent who scored four or below were considered to feel the G.R.W.C. not effective as an organization.

Can we account for the success or failure or potential success or failure of the Michigan Grand River Watershed Council as indicated

on the indices constructed? Are there factors which relate to:

1. group experience,
2. occupation,
3. geographical location, or
4. background

which suggest why some members of the G.R.W.C. are highly aware of the activities of the G.R.W.C., perceive the G.R.W.C. as being effective, and as having a positive impact upon their communities, while other members of the G.R.W.C. seem to take opposite views? If we could account for success or failure we might be able to suggest how to make voluntary organizations such as the G.R.W.C. more successful. The members' "perceptions of success" account for a substantial degree of the success of such organizations.

If the members do not perceive the G.R.W.C. as effective, it is unlikely that the G.R.W.C. can be effective. The notion of self-fulfilling prophecies is probably not better illustrated than in the case of voluntary organizations. Prophets of doom can easily destroy confidence which necessarily must accompany successful drives toward difficult goals using non-authoritative means.

ANALYZING PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATION SUCCESS OF THE GRAND RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

The Relationship of Service on the Grand River Watershed Council with Perceptions

It was felt that the nature of the Council service rendered by individual members would be related to perception of the G.R.W.C. In analyzing the relationship between types of service and perceptions, we examined four variables:

1. Did the representative seek his Council position?
2. How long did he serve on the G.R.W.C.?
3. Was he on the G.R.W.C. Executive Committee?
4. How much time did he devote to Council activities?

It was expected that those who actively sought the appointment to the G.R.W.C. would perceive the Council in the most favorable terms. They did not. In fact the opposite was demonstrated. As Table 1(A) illustrates, the four respondents who sought appointment to the Council were all very low on the perception of success index. They were the least aware (see Table 1(B)), felt it had the least positive impact on the local community (see Table 1(C)), and perceived the Council to be the least effective (see Table 1(D)).

Table 1. Seeking Appointment to the G.R.W.C. and Perceptions of Success

<i>Sought appointment</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Average index and score</i>
<i>A. Perception of Success Index</i>			
Yes	0	4	18.8
No	13	12	24.9
Total	13	16	23.9
<i>B. Perception of Awareness Index</i>			
Yes	0	4	4.3
No	11	14	8.3
Total	11	18	7.8
<i>C. Perception of Local Impact Index</i>			
Yes	1	3	3.0
No	19	6	3.7
Total	20	9	3.6
<i>D. Perception of Effectiveness Index</i>			
Yes	1	3	4.2
No	11	14	4.5
Total	12	17	4.3

As was expected, the representatives who had served on the Council the longest ranked the highest on perception of success (see Table 2(A)). The representatives who served the longest also ranked the highest on perception of awareness (see Table 2(B)), and were very high on the perception of local impact (see Table 2(C)). Unexpected was the finding that length of service did not correlate with how the members perceived its effectiveness (see Table 2(D)).

Whether a representative serves on the Executive Committee of the Council or not has a great bearing on his perceptions of the G.R.W.C. On the perception of success index, service on the Executive Committee had a pronounced favorable effect (see Table 3(A)). In both perception of awareness and perception of local impact (see Tables 3(B) and (C)), members of the Executive Committee ranked very high compared to other members. As in the preceding variable (length of service on the Council), the

Table 2. Member's Length of Service on G.R.W.C.
and Perception of Success

<i>Length of service</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Average index and score</i>
<i>A. Perception of Success Index</i>			
0-2 years	0	3	19.0
2-4 years	2	6	21.1
4-6 years	2	2	21.0
Over 6 years	9	5	27.4
Total	13	16	23.9
<i>B. Perception of Awareness Index</i>			
0-2 years	0	3	4.1
2-4 years	1	6	6.2
4-6 years	1	4	7.2
Over 6 years	9	5	11.1
Total	11	18	7.8
<i>C. Perception of Local Impact Index</i>			
0-2 years	1	2	3.1
2-4 years	5	2	4.1
4-6 years	2	3	2.4
Over 6 years	12	2	4.2
Total	20	9	3.6
<i>D. Perception of Effectiveness Index</i>			
0-2 years	1	2	4.0
2-4 years	2	5	4.1
4-6 years	3	2	4.1
Over 6 years	6	8	4.6
Total	12	17	4.3

perception of effectiveness of the Council, was not as high by the Executive Committee as the other perceptions. One can only speculate that with greater knowledge of the intricacies of the G.R.W.C. perception of effectiveness tapers off.

As with the questions pertaining to length of service on the

Table 3. Membership on the Executive Committee and Perceptions of Success

<i>On Executive Committee</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Average index and score</i>
<i>A. Perception of Success Index</i>			
Yes	10	1	28.0
No	3	15	19.8
Total	13	16	23.9
<i>B. Perception of Awareness Index</i>			
Yes	10	1	11.0
No	1	17	5.8
Total	11	18	7.8
<i>C. Perception of Local Impact Index</i>			
Yes	11	0	4.5
No	9	9	3.1
Total	20	9	3.6
<i>D. Perception of Effectiveness Index</i>			
Yes	7	4	5.2
No	5	13	3.8
Total	12	17	4.3

Council (see Table 2), and membership on Executive Committee (see Table 3), time devoted to the Council by members bore a direct relationship to perceptions (see Table 4). For each perception, the more time one devotes to Council activities, the greater are his perceptions of the Council and its ability to function with success. Realizing that the one individual in the four to six hours category is not sufficient for a conclusion, the charts still indicate a relationship between time devoted and high perceptions (see Table 4(A), (B), (C), (D)).

The Relationship Between Occupation and Geographical Location and Members' Perceptions of the G.R.W.C.

Length of residency was related to perceptions of success. Members were divided into those who had lived in Michigan "under twenty years" and "over twenty years." The difference is somewhat

Table 4. Time Devoted by Members to G.R.W.C.
and Perceptions of Success

<i>Time devoted per/month</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Average index and score</i>
<i>A. Perception of Success Index</i>			
0-2 hours	2	9	19.8
2-4 hours	5	4	24.7
4-6 hours	0	1	19.0
Over 6 hours	6	2	29.3
Total	13	16	23.9
<i>B. Perception of Awareness Index</i>			
0-2 hours	1	10	5.9
2-4 hours	5	4	8.4
4-6 hours	0	1	7.0
Over 6 hours	5	3	9.8
Total	11	18	7.8
<i>C. Perception of Local Impact Index</i>			
0-2 hours	5	6	2.9
2-4 hours	7	2	3.3
4-6 hours	1	0	4.0
Over 6 hours	7	1	4.5
Total	20	9	3.6
<i>D. Perception of Effectiveness Index</i>			
0-2 hours	3	8	4.0
2-4 hours	3	6	4.3
4-6 hours	0	1	2.0
Over 6 hours	6	2	5.2
Total	12	17	4.3

appreciable for perception of success (see Table 5(A)). Perception of awareness and perception of effectiveness indicate some variance, however the difference is not very distinguishable (see Table 5(B), (D)). The main difference is evident in Table 5(C), perception of local impact. It is quite clearly shown that members who have resided in Michigan over twenty years view the G.R.W.C. in terms of having a more favorable local impact than those members living in Michigan under twenty years.

Table 5. Length of Residence in Michigan and Perceptions of Success

<i>How long in Michigan</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Average index and score</i>
<i>A. Perception of Success Index</i>			
Under 20 years	0	6	18.3
Over 20 years	13	10	25.4
Total	13	16	23.9
<i>B. Perception of Awareness Index</i>			
Under 20 years	0	6	5.0
Over 20 years	11	12	8.5
Total	11	18	7.8
<i>C. Perception of Local Impact Index</i>			
Under 20 years	1	5	3.0
Over 20 years	19	4	3.7
Total	20	9	3.6
<i>D. Perception of Effectiveness Index</i>			
Under 20 years	1	5	3.6
Over 20 years	11	12	4.6
Total	12	17	4.3

The occupations and perceptions of the members were also directly related. The perception of success index (see Table 6(A)) indicates public servants to be the highest. Public servants remain the highest in the following three indices: perception of awareness, local impact and effectiveness (see Table 6(B), (C), (D)). The most striking difference is between the views of the professional group and others on perception of local impact and perception of effectiveness (see Table 6(C), (D)). Perhaps this group can see the

Table 6. Occupations of Members and Perceptions of Success

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Average index and score</i>
<i>A. Perception of Success Index</i>			
Public Servant	4	2	26.5
Small Business	3	2	24.5
Business Professional	6	8	24.2
Others ^a	0	4	18.5
Total	13	16	23.9
<i>B. Perception of Awareness Index</i>			
Public Servant	3	3	9.0
Small Business	2	3	8.0
Business Professional	6	8	7.9
Others ^a	0	4	5.5
Total	11	18	7.8
<i>C. Perception of Local Impact Index</i>			
Public Servant	4	1	3.8
Small Business	4	1	3.6
Business Professional	10	4	3.7
Others ^a	1	3	2.5
Total	20	9	3.6
<i>D. Perception of Effectiveness Index</i>			
Public Servant	4	2	4.8
Small Business	2	3	4.6
Business Professional	4	10	4.2
Others ^a	2	2	4.6
Total	12	17	4.3

^a Two farmers, one housewife, and one retired person.

Council as having a great local impact, but will not be effective unless it has adequate funding and power.

CONCLUSIONS: THE KEYS TO ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS

In the analysis of the data we were able to draw some conclusions about the membership of the G.R.W.C. The representatives who did seek the appointment were the least productive and

viewed the organization in the most negative manner. The longer a representative was on the Council the greater was his perception of success. Service on the Executive Committee is in direct relation to perception of success, awareness, local impact and effectiveness. The more time one spends on Council activities the more favorable his perceptions are, and the members who have lived in Michigan the longest are the most favorably disposed toward the G.R.W.C. Occupation has some relationship to perceptions also. Public servants have the highest success perceptions of the G.R.W.C.

As indicated the Michigan Grand River Watershed Council is a voluntary organization. As with any organization, the members of the G.R.W.C. do not all perceive it in the same way. Because it is a voluntary organization, coercion cannot be used to increase conformity or participation. Wage incentives are not available. To increase the usefulness of the G.R.W.C. means other than coercion must be effectuated to gain support for activities and programs.

Max Weber's traditional notion of power flowing down from the top was questioned as early as the 1930s by such students of public administration as Chester Barnard [5, p. 170] and Mary Follet. Barnard believed that power is often in the hands of the recipients of orders; and he accepted the notion that we must look at the recipients of orders and not only those giving them to understand a power structure. Barnard recognized this with his concept of the "zone of indifference." The concept "zone of indifference" was explained as follows:

If all the orders for actions reasonably practicable be arranged in the order of their acceptability to the person affected, it may be conceived that there are a number which are clearly unacceptable, that is which certainly will not be obeyed; there is another group somewhat more or less on the neutral line, that is either barely acceptable or barely unacceptable; and a third group unquestionably acceptable. This last group lies within the "zone of indifference." The person affected will accept orders lying within this zone and is relatively indifferent as to what the order is so far as the question of authority is concerned. Such an order lies within the range that in a general way was anticipated at time of undertaking the connection with the organization. For example, if a soldier enlists, whether voluntarily or not, in any army in which the men are ordinarily moved about within a certain broad region, it is a matter of indifference whether the order be to go to A or B, C or D, and so on; and goings to A, B, C, D, etc., are in the zone of indifference.

The zone of indifference will be wider or narrower depending upon the degree to which the inducements exceed the burdens and sacrifices which determine the individual's adhesion to the organization. It follows that the range of orders that will be accepted will be very limited among those who are barely induced to contribute to the system [5, p. 170].

From the previous description, it might be suggested that the G.R.W.C. must increase its members' "zones of indifference" to facilitate the desired responses to the programs, activities, and goals of the Council. Methods which might successfully be implemented to increase the "zone of indifference" are suggested by the data examined when it is considered in terms of Philip Selznick's theory of cooptation. Selznick defines cooptation as, "the process of absorbing new elements into the leadership or policy-determining structure of an organization as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence." [8, p. 217] Viewed broadly, the process of informal cooptation represents a mechanism of comprehensive adjustment, permitting a formal organization to enhance its chances for survival by accommodating itself to existing centers of interest and power within its area of operation.

In analyzing the data on the G.R.W.C. using the cooptation model, we might consider the variables of success one by one. As the data indicate, individuals who sought appointment to the Council did not perceive it as high as those who were asked to join. While there were only four members who sought appointment we can still speculate about why their perceptions were starkly different from those who were asked to join.

Selznick points out:

The concept of a regional partnership includes the idea that ordinary citizens will be drawn into the administration of the regional program through membership in voluntary associations. Wherever the execution of the overall program reaches out into a local community, it is considered desirable to organize those citizens most closely affected into an association which will participate in the administration of the program [8, p. 217].

It would serve the best interest of the Council to coopt those individuals who would bring prestige into the organization. The individuals who sought appointment were perhaps looking to gain prestige from the Council and therefore might take away something in terms of prestige from the organization. The Council needs active people and those who seek appointment indicate they have time on their hands. It would best serve the Council to coopt the active individuals in the local communities. It is essential to recognize that power in a community is distributed among those who can mobilize resources—organizational, psychological, and economic—these can effectively shape the character and role of community organizations. These individuals who have the power would be the most active in community affairs. By cooptation their power resources can become power resources for the G.R.W.C.

Positive perceptions of Council members increase the longer they serve on the Council. It is therefore essential to retain present members and coopt new members who can be induced to stay on the Council. The longer a member serves on the Council the more his prestige and time becomes invested in the organization and its programs. He therefore is inclined to change some of his attitudes in favor of the Council because if it fails he will lose prestige and also "sunk costs" such as time and effort already given. If the Council fails, it takes part of him down with it.

The members of the Executive Committee all had favorable perceptions of the Council. As above, they invested their prestige and time into an organization. If that organization fails the members of the Executive Committee would stand to lose the most.

The more time a member spends working for the Council the higher are his perceptions scores. This can again be attributed to the fact that the more time spent, the greater the personal investment and more knowledge would be gained. It is necessary to coopt workers into the Council who will contribute time, and therefore have an investment.

The data indicate that when the G.R.W.C. coopts new members it should pick individuals who have resided in Michigan and the area of the watershed for a long period of time. The data indicate that those with strong ties to the community are apt to be the most active and constructive members.

The success of voluntary programs based upon regional cooperation is very dependent upon local support. While democracy especially in our highly mobile society should demand equal treatment for the short term resident, such treatment here can have injurious effects to the success of voluntary organizations consisting of governmental units. Council members can best gain local support from the G.R.W.C. if they are familiar with local citizens, and if they are well accepted by those citizens. Many voluntary governmental councils exist in rural areas. The G.R.W.C. while encompassing a large population area is still essentially a rural based council. The cities in the area—Grand Rapids, Lansing, Jackson—are "conservative" in philosophy. Support from this kind of population particularly depends upon long term residence.

Moreover the data suggest that public servants and professionals should be coopted by the G.R.W.C. These people no doubt are the most comfortably received people in their local communities. Selznick's view is consistent with the findings:

A group oriented local official may reach a far larger number of people by working through community and county organizations than by attempting to approach his constituency as individuals. Thus the voluntary association permits the official to make use of untapped administrative resources [8, p. 225].

By coopting the individual in the power position, you bring some of that power into the organization. A public servant will not want to see an organization he is part of fail, because of the possible bearing it will have on his career.

Michigan's Grand River Watershed Council has potential. As a voluntary organization much of this potential success centers around its members' perceptions of the organization. It is suggested that cooptation is a likely means by which the organization can insure itself of active and aware members who are favorable toward public council programs. Service and long standing residence would serve as the desired qualifications of coopted new members. Service on the Executive Council would further the effectiveness of such coopted representatives. In summary, a statement from Philip Selznick captures the essence of the analysis of the data:

Even though cooptation may occur with respect to only a fraction of the organization, there will be pressure for the organization as a whole to adapt itself to the needs of the informal relationship. Viewed thus broadly, the process of informal cooptation represents a mechanism of comprehensive adjustment, permitting a formal organization to enhance its chances for survival by accommodating itself to existing centers of interest and power within its area of operation [8, p. 225].

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