

CITIZENS LEAGUE REPORT

No. 138a

League Task Force on Growth & PR

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APPROVED
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
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REPORT OF
CITIZENS LEAGUE TASK FORCE
ON PUBLICITY, PUBLIC RELATIONS
AND MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

I. PREFACE

- A. Before stating our recommendations, we believe we should state the purposes or objectives of the Citizens League for which we worked.
1. The Citizens League seeks and finds ways to improve local government wherever independent analysis and judgment so indicate. Not a study or social club, the League wants results.
 2. In order for the League to achieve results, it must have a strong, participating membership. Accordingly, the League serves its individual members by helping them understand better their local governments and by affording them an additional opportunity to participate in solving local governmental problems.
 3. The Citizens League works exclusively in the local government area, and concentrates primarily on solving intergovernmental problems within Hennepin County.

II. CONCLUSIONS

- A. The subjects of public relations and membership growth can no longer be relegated to low-priority attention by staff and volunteers. Specifically, the subject of membership growth requires immediate attention. During the past year, the League's membership declined from 3078 to 2736 -- a drop of 11%. Both new and renewal memberships declined significantly. (See Appendix A.)
- B. The League must establish realistic membership goals and annual growth rates. The League must then take the necessary actions each year to achieve these goals.

Our Task Force concludes that a necessary and attainable growth rate would be 10% per year. This growth rate would be met: 1) By pushing our renewals to 80% in 1960-61 and by keeping it there each subsequent year; and 2) by getting our membership to 3,000 by April 30, 1961.

- C. The growth rate described above is a necessary one because:
 - 1. No organization can exist for long without growth, especially one that depends for support on business firms and the public.
 - 2. A growing organization is a dynamic organization -- it has good morale, and good morale of the membership leads to greater participation.
 - 3. A growing organization requires strong leadership. Strong leadership, in turn, will lead to more accomplishments in the basic League program.
 - 4. A growing organization attracts financial support more readily.
- D. The Task Force believes strongly that the courses of action which follow are necessary, attainable and adequate.

Rather than ask for approval in toto, we believe that these suggestions be approved separately and that the responsibility for the execution of each be assigned to one individual or specific committee.

The Task Force suggests that it stay in being during the year in order to follow progress of the recommendations.

III. MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

A. Background

1. Members are generally of three types: the active participants, the occasional participants, and the non-participants who, nevertheless, wish to support the Citizens League. Our program and our publications should be addressed to all types, and our progress should be such as to make as many people active participants as possible without making the donor type of member feel unwanted.

Active participants generally won't need much prodding. We should, however, make sure that their abilities are used and that they are doing work they find interesting. This, of course, is the responsibility of the committee and subcommittee chairmen. It should always be stressed that a person can change to another committee if his or her interest flags.

We must also recognize that some people have a great many other activities, but they would like to keep informed as to the details of the League's activities. It is entirely possible that a person might get interested in a project and become very active.

2. In considering the joint problems of obtaining and maintaining Citizens League members, we believe that the majority of new members signed up during the fall drives in the past were obliging, or succumbing to the appeals of, friends. This was a charitable act and perhaps these new members considered the League a charity. But the "heart appeal" of a genuine charity was not present, hence the lack of persistency in many of these memberships.
3. We should try to sell all members on the value to themselves of understanding local government better. Most citizens recognize their obligation to vote and participate in government, but are frustrated by their own feeling of inadequacy, inexperience and lack of knowledge about where to begin. They think they have nothing to contribute if they join a committee.

Participation in a League committee can be shown to give the individual first-hand knowledge, in capsule form, of the workings of government, its methods, its weaknesses, and the individuals who are associated with it. If our new and prospective members can be persuaded that they can both learn and influence the solution of governmental problems, they will surely join the League and continue as members longer. (See Appendix B.)

B. Getting New Members

1. League Staff Responsibility. Because of its importance, one member of the League's staff should be assigned exclusively to membership growth until April 1, 1961.
2. Organization. A Membership Committee should be created to set up and administer a program for new members, as well as renewals. The committee should be headed by two people as co-chairmen. One would be a League member that is well known and influential with other businessmen in Hennepin County. He should be willing to offer his experience and knowledge of the community as well as his name for prestige purposes. The other co-chairman would direct the activities of the committee, along with the staff member.

The Membership Committee would be responsible for developing a program that includes both new members and renewals.

The committee should devise and direct the drive to reach membership goals. All tested techniques of the past may be used:

- a. Working through company groups.
- b. Selecting certain VIP's who are needed in League membership in certain areas and asking member VIP's to get them.
- c. Developing a routine for alerting original sponsors in each case where a member is coming up for renewal.
- d. Use photographs of committee chairmen and other League leaders in the NEWS and news media to develop a sense of personal acquaintance and teamwork among our members.

In planning for new members, it is important to broaden the base by including representatives from companies that are not members. Consideration should be given to include professional men, such as doctors and dentists, into membership; consideration should be given to area representation, too.

In planning a program to reduce drop-outs, active League members who are associates of the drop-out should be used. The job of holding a member's interest in the League has far-reaching problems and will be discussed in another part of our report, but a swift, positive approach must be developed to be used when a member first becomes a delinquent.

The selection of a membership committee and appointment of co-chairmen should be done immediately.

3. Long-Range Program. A program for new members should be developed that covers a period of years, rather than for a single year. Modifications can be made by each year's president and board of directors, according to past performance and current thinking.
4. Membership Goals. A goal of 3,000 members by April 1, 1961 should be set. To reach this figure, a campaign goal of at least 700-900 members should also be set.
5. A Fall Campaign. A new-membership campaign should be started by November 15. This will be after the firm membership drive, now underway, and after the United Fund Drive.

Good use can be made of the 2500-name prospect list already compiled by the staff. Many of these are citizens who worked in the CIVIC organization. The staff has already sent them two issues of the NEWS as a part of a softening-up process.

We urge that the Membership Committee consider that the campaigns be built around the idea that every current member of the League should be given the responsibility for getting an additional member. A possible slogan might be: "Each One Reach One."

A telephone subcommittee should be organized to call CIVIC members and to mop up.

C. Renewing Existing Members

1. New member orientation is extremely important.

New members should be furnished with a brief and readable resume' of the current committee and subcommittee activity, and they should be asked to choose a committee on the basis of their current activities. It is not helpful to have them check what committee they wish to belong to unless they know what the committee is doing. After they have checked a committee, the committee chairman should write them. Further, he should keep in touch with them if they fail to attend meetings. Committee chairmen should also ask the disinterested or excessively absent ones if they would like to be transferred to another committee.

New members should be furnished an effective orientation piece as to what the League is, how it operates, the areas in which it operates, etc.

Committee members should at different times be told at the committee meetings of overall League activities, much as the directors are kept informed on local events by staff reports. This kind of orientation is important in getting a general League feeling. This report might be given by an officer of director of the League.

2. More than 2/3 of our members do not serve on a committee or are otherwise active. We believe that we must communicate with them more often if we are to increase our membership renewals. The following suggestions, therefore, should be carried out during the coming year.
 - a. As new members come into the League, they should be invited to a breakfast meeting where they can meet League leaders, hear about League programs, and, hopefully, decide to become active on a committee.
 - b. All those who attend the breakfast meeting should be followed up either by telephone or letter no later than a month after the breakfast. They should be reminded again about current and important League projects and how they might participate.
 - c. Just prior to regular renewal billings, first-year members should be invited to a breakfast meeting, at which time they can meet again with the League leaders and to discuss progress of the League and the status of their current projects. If possible, second and third year (and beyond) members should be invited, too.
 - d. Midway in the year, each new member should be sent a questionnaire which would determine the degree of interest the member has in the League or League activities and to afford him an opportunity to offer suggestions for League projects or governmental problems which need solving.
 - e. If a member does not renew after the third notice, the person who first brought in the member should be asked to solicit the renewal, preferably in person. If this is impractical, he should be asked to send a note to the member which asks for his continued support.
 - f. Contact all drop-outs to determine why they left. Use this call to try again to sell them a membership. At the very least, use it to get specific information on the League's apparent weakness to that individual.
 - g. During the year, special stories in the Citizens League NEWS should be beamed to new members, others to perennial members.

IV. PUBLIC RELATIONS

A. The General Public

1. Our Image. Even though CIVIC carried the ball on the charter fight, the League was clearly identified with it. While the League was unsuccessful in this instance to achieve what we believe to be better government, we did acquaint many citizens with the League's research and action techniques. Resultantly, we believe that our image is clearer and stronger than a year ago.

Nevertheless, we are still relatively unknown to the general public in Hennepin County. We believe that fewer research projects should be attempted, and those that are should have relatively wide appeal to Hennepin County citizens. While some projects will necessarily seem of limited interest, accepted public relations techniques should be utilized to tell our story.

2. Advisory Board. Last year our Task Force suggested -- and we suggest again -- that the League set up a top-flight Public Relations Advisory Committee, which would meet for two or three hours, four or five times a year, to discuss the impact of various League activities on the various "publics" and to offer creative ideas or suggestions for strengthening the League's image.

Representing the League at these meetings would be the President, Executive Director, and Chairman of the Executive Committee.

Get Bill Powell, Director of Public Relations at Pillsbury, or one of his caliber, as chairman. Perhaps Dick Furber, Northern States Power; Nate Crabtree, General Mills; Bill Elston, Minneapolis Star and Tribune; Jim Porterfield, Honeywell, could be committee members. In any event, the chairman's first task will be to recruit his committee.

Because of the high-level nature of this job, the League President should select and recruit the chairman.

3. Speakers' Bureau. The League has many effective public speakers in its membership. To date, no organized plan exists to marshal this exceptional strength behind the major projects in the 1960-61 program.

Again this year, our suggestion would be to organize a Placement Bureau composed of volunteers. Staff time would be utilized only to coordinate the speaking dates and to monitor the plan. A retired person, housewife, or self-employed member, with initiative, should be chosen by an Executive Committee subcommittee to head the Bureau and to obtain additional volunteers.

Subjects for the speeches and the speakers should be chosen by the Executive Committee or by a subcommittee appointed by it. If possible, a plan should be given to the Placement Bureau each quarter for activation.

4. Public Meetings. We believe that the League should hold big public meetings only for major issues, and only then if any outstanding speaker can be secured.

However, the League should always be ready to conduct special events as occasion arises to exert community leadership on matters affecting the whole metropolitan area.

B. The Government Public

1. Public Officials. In two major governmental issues of the recent past -- patrol limits and charter revision -- we have been opposed to public officials. In the future, there may be big issues which will require us to mobilize the public. This independence of action easily leads to antagonism of public officials.

Nevertheless, there are other issues where our position may be close to that of the public officials. Where this happens, we should support our position just as strongly. In the long run, such forthrightness, independence, and strength of action will lead to respect among public officials.

2. "Citizen-of-the-Year" Award. Each year, probably in December, the Citizens League should make an award to a selected citizen (s). The recipient(s) would be selected by a committee of three Citizens League Board members on the basis of outstanding and effective service to local government, within the area served by the League. Award criteria and procedures should be established by the Board of Directors. Any public official or citizen would be eligible for the award. The award will be a permanent trophy that has the annual recipient's name engraved on it, and passed on from year to year. Also, each recipient would receive a plaque that he would keep permanently.

Procedure such as this, if maintained on a dignified basis, should add prestige to the League and be an award greatly prized.

C. The Membership Public

1. The Citizens League NEWS. While the NEWS is of interest to the hard-core or active membership, several things might be tried to gain readership. Care should be exercised, however, so that the present readership is not discouraged.
2. An advisory committee, composed of experienced internal newspaper editors, should be appointed by the Board. In infrequent, but important, discussion meetings, this committee would recommend improvements and suggest changes to the staff in coverage,

makeup, and writing. The Task Force believes that greater readership can be gained if the following recommendations are considered:

- a. Use occasional photographs, even though only $\frac{1}{2}$ column in size. Investigate offset reproduction so we can make greater use of photos at lower cost.
 - b. Design a one-color masthead which could "float" about the page, thus giving emphasis to the featured story. Printing will be less expensive and more flexible, too.
 - c. Play up the committees' activities, even though some are only in the beginning of a project.
 - d. Use a "bingo card" layout to make it convenient for interested members to request full copies of reports or minutes of Directors' or committees' meetings.
 - e. Use techniques of reader participation; i.e., Letter to the Editor, Guest Column, or by-lined story.
2. Committees. Some of our committees just don't provide strong -- or smart -- leadership. Weak, ineffectual committees lead to desultory results -- but more dangerously to discouraged members.

The Executive Committee should evolve and carry out in 1960-61 a training session for chairmen. Purpose: to teach them the techniques of committee leadership.

Chairmen should be told how important their jobs are. They should be given -- in writing -- the objectives and the function of their committees. They should be asked to discuss both thoroughly at the first committee meeting. Changes or improvements will be welcomed. This procedure should result in more productive committee work.

3. Committee Meetings. These are the heart of the League. More members would serve actively on committees if we made it easier for them. Currently, most committees meet at noon in the downtown area. Consideration should be given to suburban or regional committee structures and meetings. Also, to meetings held in private homes, neighborhood Y's, or schools.

Fireside report meetings on metropolitan problems should be taken into the suburban areas one-by-one, as a means of training League members there, and as a further means by which those League members can interest their neighbors.

4. Television. We should use Channel 2 as a "closed circuit" communication medium to our membership whenever we have something important to say.

V. PUBLICITY

A. Topical

The League should speak out more often on happenings of a topical nature. For example, the Morning Tribune recently carried a story about a large jump in the local crime rate. Certainly, our Public Safety Committee has been studying this problem long enough to be able to suggest an intelligent news release giving the League's viewpoint on this significant happening in our community. Care must be exercised, though, that we don't speak prematurely. Nevertheless, we can be more responsive to the citizens' interests than we are at present.

Ways and means of responding properly to topical happenings should be spelled out by the Public Relations Advisory Board (See IV, A2).

B. Feature

We should try to interest city and suburban papers in a series on League activities. A news peg might be what other local governments are accomplishing; i.e., Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, and how we compare.

We should send frequent story ideas to suburban and small city papers. Many of these ideas can be slight rewrites of material already printed or slated for the League NEWS.

We should invite editors to selected board and committee meetings.

VI. LITERATURE

A. We should have a basic piece of literature for prospective members.

- . It should stress the benefits of League membership to the thoughtful citizen. It should also list the objectives of the League, our major accomplishments, and our current and future projects.

The preparation of the folder should be the responsibility of the Membership Committee.

B. We should design and print a standard, inexpensive, but unique, report folder. Such a folder would dress up committee reports, board policies, a roster of members, and other reports which are circulated to members, public officials, and to the public.

APPENDIX A

Individual Membership Comparison - Sept. - Aug.

	<u>1959-60</u>	<u>1958-59</u>
Total billings	2500	2475
Members renewed	1810	1887
% Renewed	72%	76%
New Members	486	791
Individual Members	2296	2678
Firm Members	440	400
Total Members	2736	3078

APPENDIX B --- BASIC APPEALS

As a public service organization, the League perhaps has at least five basic appeals; i.e., 1) community responsibility or obligation, 2) personal participation in government, 3) information, 4) education, and 5) prestige.

1. Community responsibility or obligation is first for effectiveness in obtaining new members. Many people suspect that there is room for improvement in government operations and feel either a responsibility to their fellow citizens or an obligation to their own families to help bring it about. It takes a lot of public subscriptions to run an independent governmental research organization, but sharing the expense lightens the individual share and increases the League's influence through wider disseminations.

Government methods, particularly in Minneapolis, have not kept up with the advances of science and the business community. A strong Citizens League is most vital to cooperation between various governmental units, including suburbs and Minneapolis, and the business community (its productivity is government's treasury).

2. Those who desire to participate in local government but cannot afford to for a variety of reasons are a sizable group. Committee membership permits identifying one's self with the problems and activities of a government unit. Committee work provides an outlet for political inclinations; through it the League harnesses the talents and sparks ideas that would otherwise be lost to the community. As part of a strong and independent organization, committee members can voice and test theories and search out improved methods in the business and governmental world. In the League, problem solving and creative thinking by the community's best minds are encouraged by the absence of government rules and regulations and premature publicity.
3. A primary service of the League is the authoritative governmental information it compiles and disseminates. A portion of it is included in the semi-monthly Citizens League NEWS, thereby briefing the membership and alerting interested individuals to full committee reports in the League library.

The Voters Guide is a service of the Citizens League. In cooperation with the League of Women Voters and the Star and Tribune, the photograph, background and views of each candidate for Minneapolis and Hennepin County public office is set out and widely distributed.

Every business and professional man in touch with the public or local governmental offices should be aware of the independent and objective views of the Citizens League on current local issues. The editorial policy governing the NEWS is to insure an objective analysis of vital governmental questions with a view to determine what is best for the community as a whole.

4. The Citizens League is the outstanding source in the area for a non-partisan political education. It encourages League membership and subsequent candidacy for public office of capable, properly motivated people. Conclusions of League research reports provide strong planks for office seekers who are dedicated to serving the community and not some special interest.

As more or less of a Bureau of Governmental Research, the League disseminates information about local governments of this area to increase the knowledge of the public in general. Experience indicates that understanding government increases the interest in it.

Knowledge of the relationships between various units of government, personal acquaintanceship with office holders, and recognition of their responsibilities are all more easily available through activity in the Citizens League. Then, the League research conducted on a national basis and the authorities brought before League committees take on added meaning and accelerate the flow of ideas and stimulate additional, more intelligent citizen action.

5. The League roster is a virtual Who's Who in Minneapolis and Hennepin County. The members of the Board of Directors are capable and highly respected citizens who have demonstrated their interest in the welfare of the community. Any God-fearing soul should value an opportunity to join with them in this noble effort.

Actions and statements of the Citizens League do not endanger the prestige of individuals or companies which are members of the League. Independent research and consideration by intelligent, civic-minded people can only be admired. Conclusions logically thereafter arrived at cannot be ignored. Thorough consideration by public officials then adds to the prestige of League members and possibly educates local officials.

It seems that all of these appeals become stronger when the League commands a hearing from local government and applies pressure to local officials. It is infrequent that an individual, small group or single company can do this on a legitimate basis.