PROGRAMMING

FOR AMERICAN LEGION LEADERS

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"OLD TIMERS NIGHT" - A NIGHT TO REMEMBER:-

One of the best ways to re-enlist the support of formerly active members is to stage an "OLD TIMERS' NIGHT" dedicated to the post commanders, adjutants and others who played a prominent role in the past performances of your local American Legion Post.

IT'S ALWAYS FAIR WEATHER WHEN OLD TIMERS GET TOGETHER!

Many posts have done this with great success. Recently we received newspaper clippings from Bernard F. Boland, Winona, Minnesota Post No. 9 Commander, of just such a meeting which scored a hit in that area.

Here's some stunts they used: Commanders and Adjutants relived their years in capsule form as the adjutant and commander teams of five year intervals read the monthly minutes of 1921, 1925, 1930, 1936, 1940 and 1945.

To put the audience in a reflective, happy mood a pianist played World War I songs for each of the teams appearing on the program. This, plus a modern version of the post's famous German band of the late twenties.

Several efforts to "correct" the old minutes were gaveled down by the presiding commanders. You can imagine the fun some old timers had doing the "correcting".

In planning the meeting, Boland said he tried to keep the atmosphere of the era preceding World War II, so the younger veterans could become acquainted acquainted with the post history through the recitals of those who had helped make it.

We like this idea. We know that the folks who attended that meeting liked it. If you haven't held such an OLD TIMERS' NIGHT, why not give it a try. It is a night that your whole community can enjoy. It will be a night to remember.

MAKE EVERY POST MEETING A PRODUCTION:-

Poor attendance at post meetings is the bane of every post commander's existence. What to do in order to get a representative gathering causes a lot of good Legion leaders a year 'round headache and some say they have yet to find the answer.

"Every public speaker should remember that the longer the spoke, the greater the tire!"

Here's a few suggestions to get the crowd out for meeting nights--and what's more important, keep them coming back.

A successful post commander starts the meeting on time, runs it on time and finishes on time. Nothing detracts more than late starts, long talks, or holding an audience after time the meeting is supposed to break up. Announce your schedule in advance and stick to it.

Keep the bar closed during the meeting. Knock it off at least an hour before meeting time. Let this become a standard practice and you'll be surprised how attention and attendance will pick up.

Keep all speakers to a minimum time limit agreed upon by the majority, relaxing this rule only on special occasions for 'name' speakers, when you think this relaxing of the rule is necessary. Don't curtail debate on a subject, if it is provoking interest, but curtail the long winded.

You, Mr. Commander, control the gavel, which means you control the conduct of the meeting. Many posts have adopted a rule that no member can talk on any subject from the floor longer than three minutes--reports excepted. No member can speak on the same subject more than once. If a subject is brought up that is not in line with the agenda, it may be ruled out of order.

Maintain a permanent reception committee for the new member--or members attending their first few meetings. Recognize them from the chair. Introduce them to all members--and get them acquainted with a program that will keep them coming to meetings. Give your members a 'top to spin' and you have a better chance to keep them in the fold.

Confer with Chamber of Commerce people on use of traveling exhibits and current promotional ideas of community interest. Many hometown industries have demonstrations available that will pep up a post meeting.

"Use them-or lose them" applies to putting your membership to work. Give everybody a job to do and if possible one that they can do best. New members might be honored by being presented with white carnations for wearing as a boutoniere, or better yet an American Legion Poppy--the signal for everyone to make themselves acquainted with the new member. Some posts have the fledglings garner autographs from everyone present, a simple way of getting to know the names of the older members.

ONE GOOD MEETING DESERVES ANOTHER:-

Audience participation is the key to many a top-flight meeting. Don't let it get out of control, but leave 'em smiling when you say goodbye--some good natured gag like an alarm clock going off at the end of allotted time can be helpful.

Motion picture projectors are available if you plan to use a film. Visual aid dealers rent them, complete with films and operator, if you can afford that type of set-up. Recruiting stations and auto dealers are willing to loan these for free, if you use a promotional type film. Write to FILMS, Box 1055, Indianapolis, Ind., for The American Legion Film Catalog.

Have your Sergeant-at-Arms check on the meeting hall. Be sure that all facilities are in good working order. Make up a list of such details for him to check regularly. Then you won't be embarrassed by the crack "somebody goofed", if the public address system doesn't work, or if certain necessary 'props' are not available.

One good meeting leads to another. If you hold a bang-up meeting and have your membership on fire with enthusiasm--don't let them down. Examine the elements that scored the hit and retain them for your next session, but with the added fillip of showmanship and variety that is so important. You might put the question squarely up to the membership--what would they like most as an attraction at their next meeting--keeping in mind that you can't afford Marilyn Monroe, of course.

Your post meeting is in competition with the best of Broadway these days--which includes top TV talent in boxing and ballet, not to mention local attractions like a basketball tournament. Even the easy chair and slippers can be tough competitors. You need promotion and publicity to overshadow competition and reduce inertia. Play up the angle "You'll be missing something, if you stay away" in your bulletins and newspaper publicity.

Meetings are made up of people. They have come to be entertained, educated or enthused. They are people who must be reached, persuaded and motivated as individuals. If you plan your post meetings properly, you can make them impressive. Proper planning, which includes consulting the Manual of Ceremonies, will make your post meeting a real production.

FOR YOUR FUTURE BOOK:-

Even at this late date can't help but pass along the community service suggestion of John Gill, Post No. 2, Pueblo, California. The post played host to 60 street sales boys of Pueblo Star Journal & Chieftain Newspapers. Voiture 827 brought the lads to the party in a 40 & 8 Locomotive. Christmas carols preceded a Turkey Dinner with all the fixins, the arrival of Santa Claus with presents and Christmas stockings wound up a most enjoyable night which included movies and volunteer vodvil acts. You couldn't have a better group of youngsters boosting The American Legion. Don't wait 'til Christmas, revamp this idea and use it now.

APRIL IS CHILD WELFARE MONTH:-

The accent will be on youth in April, which is The American Legion traditional Child Welfare Month. All Posts have been asked to plan a child welfare meeting or other special event for or with children during the month.

A new eight-page folder of ideas and suggestions for this annual observance is available from the National Child Welfare Division. In addition, the National Public Relations Division has issued a special child welfare "clip sheet" complete with the latest information, suggested local news releases and editorials. Both are yours for the asking.

Get a committee at work now. Everybody likes kids. There is inestimable public relations value in the American Legion Child Welfare Program, and at the same time you will make your community a better place for all children and youth.

Says National Commander J. Addington Wagner: "There is no better way to build health and vigor into your entire Post than through the sponsorship of worthwhile activities for the children and young people of your community.

EDITOR'S NOTE:- WHY NOT WRITE TO PROGRAMMING AND TELL US WHAT YOUR POST IS DOING TO ENCOURAGE GREATER INTEREST IN POST MEETINGS, ETC., YOUR POST WILL GET PROPER CREDIT IF WE PASS THE SUGGESTION ALONG.

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NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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Radio and T.V.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING ABOUT THE AMERICAN LEGION BIRTHDAY, MARCH 15-17?

Radio and television stations are required to allot a certain amount of time to public service programs and your Post can obtain such broadcasting time without charge.