

that at some future date endorsement of a proposed piece of legislation by this group could be influential in helping a member state to get it passed by its legislature.

The potential of this organization is almost unlimited. But this potential can only be reached through combined effort and participation by all of its members. It will take new ideas, much creative thinking, and much voluntary and continued effort. At these meetings, we need not only quality papers, but also good discussion of them. It the business meetings of this organization, we need your ideas and participation. Throughout the year, we need to keep up the exchange of information.

Bear these things in mind during this year's program. Let's have a good meeting.

Now, I will introduce your program chairman, Mr. Dave Swindell, and turn the program over to him.

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## "SUPERVISION OF FIELD OFFICERS"

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*Missouri Conservation Commission*

Mr. President, Officers and Members of the Southeast Law Enforcement Association—and our good supporters from other fields of fish, game and forestry management that I see are among those present today—it is a pleasure to be with you, an honor and privilege to have the opportunity to express my opinion in regard to law enforcement supervisory responsibilities.

To men who have responsibilities similar to mine, how many times have you heard the remark—"I wonder who in the devil approved this silly project?" Or how often, the complaint—"I don't have time for enforcement work, because I'm loaded down with unrelated assignments." How frequently have you heard the gripe—"It's getting to the point that you don't know who is 'Boss' in this outfit any more." What encourages such statements? Where should we place the blame? Perhaps complaints of this nature can be attributed to—poor supervision or leadership—inadequate communications—lack of a clear-cut understanding of administrative procedures or policies—and possibly insufficient job knowledge.

Although it is most unlikely, there shall ever come the day that we will be entirely clean of "bitching" of some kind—and a little of such is supposed to be expected and even desirable in an organization of size. However, we can, and should, prevent as much as possible any misunderstanding of special work assignments and complaints regarding operations of the department.

Most wildlife conservation agencies are operating on a "scientific knowledge" basis and—we, who are close to the "hub" of the administrative wheel—may—too often—be guilty of failing to properly inform our subordinates of new developments or to give them sufficient background or reasons on requests for their cooperation in special projects or programs. A few minutes of our time, in explanation—or a memorandum stating in some detail, important phases, purposes, or objectives relative to assignments originating in the Central Office—might prevent considerable waste of time by both supervisors and agents—produce better results—more concise reports—and eliminate grumbling—gripping—and criticism of personnel of other divisions of sections.

Copies of correspondence of relevance to special activity are helpful in informing the men in the field of what's going on "upstairs."

I'll admit it is sometimes difficult to obtain the cooperation of other administrative workers in providing copies of their memorandums for field men, but it is not too much—or too difficult—for you to watch for items of importance in your mail that should be relayed to the field supervisors or agents and to see that copies are promptly furnished for their information or reference.

We sometimes may forget that just because *we* have seen the "blueprint"—or have "inside information" that explains a new policy or program to our satisfaction—and that since we are cognizant of all the facts, we assume therefore that a brief memo of instructions is all that is necessary to set the wheels in motion. We expect the men to read between the lines—or, perhaps, we may think they will become better informed in some manner as the assignment progresses. As a result, we often set the stage for half-hearted participation, poor decisions, and meager accomplishment.

You have heard the verse—"I'm not allowed to run the engine, the whistle, I can blow. It's not my place, to say how far the train may go. I get in trouble if I shoot off steam. I cannot clang the bell, but let the damn thing jump the track, then see who catches hell!"

I believe, in order to get the kind of "line play" and "ball handling" that makes a winning team, every member should be acquainted with the important "signals and play" called by the "quarterbacks." It is impossible, as we know, to invite every man into the administrative "huddle"—but it is our responsibility and obligation to see that the field officers receive sufficient information to "block"—"tackle"—or make the "offensive opening" so often necessary if we're to advance the "ball of our responsibility" down the conservation field. It is true—the "plays" are sometimes given us with a minimum of information and by the time they are finally transmitted to the field from our "administrative bench" they have been further reduced—or confused—and the expected end results are either delayed or insufficient. I do not intend to leave the impression that it is necessary to spell out in detail all their assignments—I do believe the men should be acquainted with important data.

Since it is *our* obligation to see that all workers under our supervision are properly informed on all issues or work programs, in which they are involved, and understand the objectives, conferences with supervisors and in-service training sessions of agents can accomplish worthwhile results in this regard. Periodic, well planned or arranged meetings of this kind are earnestly recommended. Three purposes will be served: first, and most important, the occasion to demonstrate *your* enthusiasm for the work; second, the opportunity to explain and answer questions regarding the difficult aspects of the job; and last, but not least, it gives the men a chance to express their ideas and become a part of the team and feel that they have a say in the planning. When the men are given the opportunity to learn what is expected and the purpose of the work, much better results will be obtained.

You know that sometimes, regardless of what road you take, someone will tell you that if you had followed a different route, you would have arrived 15 minutes sooner. I have observed that, occasionally, one of the most inexcusable and harmful mistakes we become guilty of as supervisors or administrative officers, is "second guessing." In expressing our opinion or judgment after a mistake has been made—or an operation has become fouled—we fail to take in consideration that *we may have had the facts* on which to base *our decision or comment*, that may not have been furnished the agent or supervisor. We cannot deny that agents make more decisions than any other group connected with a conservation department and they have more people to satisfy or please with their decisions. Is it any wonder then that they are so often criticized or "second guessed" about them? The least any of us can do is to take into careful consideration the information that the

agent had in arriving at his decision and the premises under which he was operating at the time before we cast judgment. It is a poor supervisor who hastily criticizes or "second guesses" an agent without knowledge of all the circumstances involved.

Premature remarks on how *we* would have handled the situation—or what action *should have* been taken—may create resentment or humiliation and may result in future hesitency or reluctance on the part of the officer to exercise individual initiative or judgment so important in this work. Unless we are fully informed of and understand all the facts that prompted a decision or action, we should be careful in expressing our opinion of what was right or what was wrong.

Dr. Gabis, Professor of Political Science at the University of Missouri, states that the primary function of all administrators is to make decisions. He estimates that the average state employee in Missouri makes 20 decisions per hour. Most of these decisions are made within certain guide-lines or in conformance with policy, so it is of the utmost importance that each employee know within what areas he may make decisions, and the premises under which they are to be made. It is much easier to recognize error than to observe accomplishment. It is my belief that in this work, we should attempt more "good findings" and less "fault finding."

I suggest that before criticizing a subordinate's action, a careful self-analysis of our administrative procedures be conducted—to determine whether or not we may have failed to provide prior, sufficient information or training—or as the professor said—guide lines. Although it might be embarrassing to admit—it is quite likely we should assume at least partial blame for many of the mistakes committed by the men under our charge. *Remember*—it is easy to say what should have been done, or shift the blame, after an error in judgment has been made. Your post-decision is reached on what has *already* happened and you have the advantage in your evaluation—and before you administer a reprimand or become too critical—ask *yourself*—what *you* could have done to prevent the mistake. It is incumbent on us to make every effort to prevent job errors—and as leaders or teachers we should make use of our position as often as possible to explain or show how work should be done. People learn and understand better through examples they can see. They are encouraged by help—criticism may bring discouragement, indecisiveness, and complacency. A major manufacturing concern has this admonition posted on bulletin boards throughout their plant to remind supervisors of their obligations.

I'd rather see a sermon  
Than hear one any day;  
I'd rather one should walk with me  
Than merely show the way;  
For the eye's a better pupil  
And more willing than the ear;  
Good counsel is confusing  
But examples always clear.

And best of all the preachers  
Are the men who live their creeds;  
For to see good put in action  
Is what everybody needs.  
I can soon learn how to do it,  
If you let me see it done  
I can watch your hands in action,  
But your tongue too fast may run.

And the lectures you deliver  
May be very fine and true,  
But I'd rather get my lesson  
By observing what you do;  
For I may misunderstand you  
And the high advice you give,  
But there's no misunderstanding  
How you act and how you live.

Ernie Swife, in his article "The Man With the Badge," said—"A successful officer must be endowed with certain basic characteristics. Among the most important are judgment and decision—split second decisiveness to follow through and in emergencies to shoot the works, etc." I know of no job that requires the courage to make decisions than that of the conservation officer.

So before becoming too critical—take into consideration that many times the officer does not have the time to weigh *all* circumstances at leisure. He must act immediately—on the spot. If he's later proven wrong, we should make every effort to defend him. Perhaps, had we been in his shoes, we might have committed the same error—or even a greater one.

It is generally agreed by personnel managers—and particularly in the law enforcement field—that no supervisor should attempt to direct the activities of more than a dozen officers—8 to 10 is more desirable. The need for more officers and closer supervision appears to be one of the major problems in wildlife law enforcement. It is a severe handicap in many areas of our responsibilities.

Until a couple of years ago, seven district supervisors in Missouri were attempting to manage fourteen to twenty agents each. Problems of various kinds were continuous and increasing. We felt—if we were to keep pace with the growing work-load and provide effective field supervision—that it would be necessary to establish at least two new supervisory areas. Although we are not entirely satisfied with our present arrangements of nine (9) supervisory districts, much improvement has been noted in agents' work habits, conduct, and other activities—or lack of it—that formerly caused much trouble.

Our records since the reduction in number of men and size of area assigned to one supervisor indicate that we are getting a maximum of accomplishment from the field officers. Better work planning and attention to more important detail and renewed interest in all phases of work has been much in evidence. Supervisors are taking advantage of the new arrangement to use men with special talents—particularly in enforcement work and several worthwhile or headline cases have resulted. Teamwork and planning in recent months on enforcement problems has reached a very desirable plateau—arrests for deer spot-lighting—for major fishing violations—for forest fire incendiaryism—for illegal commercialization and other difficult cases have all increased measurably. In addition, permit sales have picked up in nearly every county and—in my opinion—the increase has more than compensated for the additional costs of the two new supervisors. Also—waste of time and mileage by the agents on unimportant activities have been reduced considerably. It has been interesting to observe that a few of our heretofore "sundown" and "payday" men have either sought other employment or gone to work. We have also been able to save a few good men who were getting in a rut from lack of adequate supervision. We have re-railed others who were occasionally jumping the track. Another important result has been that supervisors now have more time to devote to special functions of their office, as well as to individual agent problems and are showing much more accomplishment in their work in general.

It is vastly important in this special field of supervision that we maintain a clear-cut line of communication—*both oral and written*—to

our subordinates and particularly to our supervisory personnel—that we must be able to properly evaluate their work and determine progress. In order for the men to understand us, we must first understand them—and be sure that they have sufficient detailed information and instructions as promptly as possible to do the work expected from them.

We should constantly keep in mind that the loyalty we demand from our subordinates is a two-way street and before we can insist on their wholehearted and complete devotion to the functions of the department and maintain their respect and confidence—we must demonstrate our knowledge and understanding of their problems and the work, and convincingly show our willingness to unselfishly stand behind their mistakes as well as their accomplishments. We must set an example of our own sincerity of purpose and dedication or devotion to duty.

I do not believe too much in the cliché—that familiarity breeds contempt, but in our close association with supervisors and agents we should be on guard against promoting or showing favor to, or preference for, special achievements of a few individuals. We may happen to have knowledge of some incident that impressed us; but chances are we may be slighting others who have had similar experiences—that were not called to our attention. In this work, as you well know, modesty is a virtue and often we, as administrators, are not appraised of many significant pieces of work—or individual effort—that should be commended. I believe sincerely in giving credit *where* and *when* it is due—and that a pat on the back will *encourage good men* to do a better job—but also that *praise of one not so good* may make him *worse*. The most effective praise results from the supervisor telling his men—or man—that the chief or director was real pleased with a particular good piece of work or judgment. Mark Twain said “Most of us can live for a month on a good compliment.”

If we make every effort to see that our men are kept properly and promptly informed and aware of what is expected of them—it will not be necessary for us to do much of their work for them. Abraham Lincoln once said—“You do not help a man when you do for him what he can and should do for himself.”

In conclusion, it is our responsibility to provide proper leadership and let the field supervisors supervise their men; but we must keep foremost in our minds our obligation to keep them supplied with all will assist them in keeping the conservation wheel spinning. We must not lose sight of the fact that regardless of all the two-way radios—handbooks—and other modern communications media; that we must follow up with personal contact, firsthand instructions, proper recognition of job performance, and abolish any reluctance we may have to trust or take the men into our confidence so that they can get a better look at some of our problems and we can, at the same time, listen to their point of view or observe through their eyes some of the difficulties. If we will bear in mind that they are capable, anxious, and willing to get a good job done and provide them with proper *support*, sufficient information and the necessary tools, and back their decision even though they may not have been the ones we think we would have made, the men in the field will then know *WHY* and *WHO* approved the “silly” project. They will *devise* ways and means through *their own initiative* to find the *time needed for enforcement*; they will be encouraged to a better performance in all work phases, and, *above all*, they will have no *question or doubt* concerning the *identity* of the *qualifications* of their “Bosses.”

You have been a real fine group to talk to. I appreciate this opportunity to express my “administrative feelings.”