



Scout Movement or Just an Organization?

Baden-Powell said "First I had an idea. Then I saw an ideal. Now we have a Movement, and if some of you don't watch out we shall end up with *just* an organization" (emphasis added). Is Scouts Canada "just" an organization?

In its book *The Fundamental Characteristics of Scouting*, the World Organization of the Scout Movement writes, "A movement implies not only a dynamic process aimed at achieving an objective, but also some type of organization and structure to ensure this. What is important to bear in mind is that if, within a movement, organization and structure are... a necessity, they are also... not an end in themselves but a means to achieve the movement's purpose... Furthermore, because Scouting is a movement, the organization must be dynamic and adaptable in order to constantly enable the movement to achieve its purpose in light of the rapid and inevitable societal changes. Organizations that are self-serving and self-perpetuating go against the very concept of a movement."

Unfortunately, Scouts Canada ignores the sage observations of both B-P and WOSM. Scouting in Canada has suffered from a failure to move in the same direction as our society, which increasingly values democracy. Our organization has in fact gone the other way. Scouts Canada has become structured on a top-down basis where everyone in authority is appointed through a circular system which excludes the ordinary members.

Not only is this contrary to our fundamental values but it is a formula for cronyism. Ultimately, choices are made from among persons who are best known to those making the appointments. It leads to appointment of like-minded people who are, consequently, unlikely to question the direction senior management is taking. Accountability today is a one way street since the appointees continue to serve only by the consent of their superiors. Anyone who is not willing to follow the party line therefore has little chance of being chosen for a position of leadership or remaining in such position. This centralization of authority precludes the diversity of views that leads to healthy debate and a stronger organization.

With a democratic procedure for choosing leadership, the voice of the Movement's grass roots members will be heard because the leadership must look to the membership for support. With democracy we find that accountability is a two way street. The leadership has the moral authority to give direction having been chosen by the members. Concurrently, the membership will follow the leadership because they have had the opportunity to express confidence in the leadership.

The reason for widespread discontent among the membership of Scouts Canada is not hard to understand. The Ordinary-member has been disenfranchised, with no vote and no say. Being asked for your views and opinions by persons who are appointed is of no value. An appointee bears no risk, in other words has no accountability, when he or she ignores those views and opinions. Appointees never has to justify anything to the grass roots membership.

We will only have a vibrant and effective Scouts Canada when the management becomes accountable to the membership. Join SCOUT eh! and help make Scouts Canada a democratic association accountable to its members.

Find out more: <http://ScoutEh.ca/> info@ScoutEh.ca

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