Leadership – Reaching a Consensus

The following information is taken from Leadership is Everyone’s Business, by John Lawson, Leslie Griffin and Franklyn Donant, 1976.

Avoid arguing for your own priorities
- Present your position as lucidly and logically as possible, but listen to other members’ reactions and consider them carefully before you press your point.

Do not assume that someone must win and someone must lose when discussion reaches a stalemate
- Instead, look for the next most acceptable alternative for all parties. Create a win-win situation.

Do not change your mind simply to avoid conflict and to reach an agreement and harmony
- When agreement seems to come too quickly and easily, be suspicious. Explore the reasons and be sure everyone accepts the solution for similar or complementary reasons. Yield only to positions that have objectives and logically sound foundations.

Avoid conflict-reducing techniques such as majority vote, averages, coin-flips and bargaining
- When a dissenting member finally agrees, don’t feel that he must be rewarded by having his own way on some later point.

Differences of opinion are natural and expected. Seek them out and try to involve everyone in the decision process
- Disagreements can help the group’s decision because with a wide range of information and opinions, there is a greater change that the group will hit upon more adequate solutions.