

subject. Then the assistant representatives were notified of the meeting and they, in turn, advised the members. Thus, most members attended and maximum value was obtained from the talk and subsequent discussion.

In contrast, the representatives who were considered unreliable rarely held a meeting of interest to the group. They seldom took the initiative in presenting group problems to the technical assistance agent, or in inviting him to give a talk in the community.

Three of the 35 representatives interviewed in 1973 had not repaid their loans on time. The members of these three groups recognized that they had made a mistake in electing the representatives. They pointed out, however, that it is very difficult to select the right person. According to the members of the groups with the irresponsible representatives, these three individuals had previously had a good record in the community; and, while the groups were being formed, they had been very active and had given the impression they would diligently serve the interests of the group.

### **Legalization of the Organization**

Two of the 35 groups studied in 1973 had drawn up documents outlining the regulations governing the functioning of the groups, and the penalties that would be imposed on violators. These documents had been signed by the members of the groups, the assistant representatives, the general representative, and the municipal president, and had been registered at the municipal headquarters. In this way, the groups acquired legal power to take action against a member in case he should deliberately cause problems.

Legalization of the organizations at the municipal level is viewed by most groups as a useful step in making the groups more efficient. In the future, it is expected that the technical assistance agents can guide other groups in drafting by-laws and in registering them with the municipal authorities.

## **OUTLOOK FOR MORE ADVANCED FORMS OF ORGANIZATION**

The information collected in the study of the farmer organizations indicates that several of the groups have made outstanding progress in learning how to work together in resolving problems of common interest. These groups are now ready to move to higher forms of organization, such as cooperatives.

The evolution from credit groups to more complex organizational forms will require the assistance of people well trained in the theory and practice of farmer organization. It seems logical that the technical assistance agent could best provide this assistance in a program such as the Puebla Project. The present agents in Puebla, however, are not technically prepared to do this job. To remedy this situation, the technical assistance agents could receive specialized training related to the operation of farmer organizations.

## **SUMMARY**

The experiences gained in Puebla since 1969 support the thesis that a very simple organizational form, such as the credit group, should be used in the initial stages of organizing farmers who may often be distrustful and individualistic, with limited managerial ability. After the farmers have gained confidence in the Project, and experience in collective action, and have developed responsible leaders with administrative capacity, then higher forms of organization may be achieved. It is expected that this second stage will be much more complex than the first, and will require technical assistance agents well trained in the organization of farmers.