

THE CENTRE  
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*The Centre for Army Leadership (CAL) is the British Army's custodian of leadership debate, thinking and doctrine. It seeks to stimulate discussion about leadership and so further the institution's knowledge of best practice and experience. **Leadership Insights** are published periodically by the CAL to feed and shape the leadership debate in the Army through a range of themes and ideas designed to inform and challenge its readership. The CAL actively seeks new authors for its Leadership Insights.*

## Leadership The Green Jacket Way

by Field Marshal The Lord Bramall of Bushfield

Although Field Marshal Lord Bramall may not be well known to a younger generation of soldiers, his career spanned four decades of military command. As well as taking part in the Normandy landings as a 2Lt and commanding a battalion on operations in Borneo in 1966, he also served as a brigade and divisional commander, C-in-C Land Forces and was CGS during the Falklands conflict. In Borneo Bramall wrote *Leadership The Green Jacket Way*, a booklet on leadership that survives to this day as *Leadership The Rifles Way*. Extracts from the original booklet, which can be found complete in his new book *The Bramall Papers: Reflections in War and Peace* are reproduced here with his permission. Originally written for officers, it is just as applicable to soldiers. Some advice is enduring; some more applicable to the infantry; some is very much of the 1960s. It is for the reader to identify and draw lessons from his words.

### **The Aim – High Morale**

When you take command of a platoon or later of a company or even a battalion, you should always have one constant aim: that is to ensure that the men for whom you are responsible have, what is generally described as, a 'High Morale'.

If you achieve this you will be doing your job; for if there is high morale, it means that not only are all ranks individually and collectively contented, but that they have also acquired that spirit of service and self-discipline which is so necessary if they are to carry out their duty properly and stand up to discomfort and danger. A body of men with high morale is both happy and efficient and in every way capable of carrying out the demanding military commitments of the 1960s. Nothing less will suffice and no officer should rest or be content until he is quite satisfied that he has achieved this aim. The challenge is exciting, but will demand hard work and dedication and a thoroughly professional approach to the job. On the other hand, the fruits of success will be infinitely rewarding.

### **On Discipline and Self Discipline**

In the Green Jackets we rightly put the emphasis on self-discipline rather than the imposed variety favoured by some others. We seek, by good leadership, example, explaining what we are doing and generally treating those under us with humanity and common sense, to evoke a loyal response and produce the sense of responsibility needed.

Officers and NCOs can be ordered to tighten up on a particular point [of discipline]. The important thing is to keep the aim always in mind and not get obsessed by the means to an end. Drill, and ultra-high standards of turnout, are not an end *in themselves*. A man with a shaven head will not necessarily be a more disciplined man than one with a normal haircut, nor a man with 'dagged' boots better than one with clean boots; although a generally dirty man and untidy man will almost certainly have poor self-discipline and require checking. What is required is a reasonable standard of turnout with special pre-announced spurts if special results are required, or if there is an indication that discipline is suffering. This also applies to drill, where there should be a reasonable constant emphasis with a special drive on occasions.

Discipline, however, is far more easily 'caught' than 'taught'. Men will react to some degree to the threat of punishment, particularly pay stoppages, to a much greater extent than having it explained to them why certain orders and routines are necessary both in the field and in barracks; but most of all to seeing that those who administer discipline and give them orders are disciplined men themselves, with all that implies in terms of punctuality, turnout and obeying themselves the orders they enforce. The rest will then follow provided they are given the opportunity to display their discipline and are taken to task whenever they fall down on

what they are supposed to do. What must be avoided at all costs is the bullying, blustering type of junior leader who covers up his incompetence and lack of leadership by shouting and swearing. That is not discipline under any circumstances.

To sum up, as a leader you should explain what is necessary and announce your standards, set an example, give your men the opportunity to do what is required of them without bullying, and then 'hammer' them with a fair but stern punishment if they do not make the grade. The chance is that next time they will. To put it another way, you should decide where to draw the line and make it clear to everyone where that line is and what will happen to them if they cross it. There can be no uncertainty or misunderstanding.

### **On Leadership**

Leadership must always be executed in a positive, personal and dynamic way. A leader must not only have a policy and be capable of leading but he must be seen to be doing so. It is no excuse for you as a young [leader] to plead that you have not made much contact with your men, because they do not really wish to see you all that much, or because you are shy or bad at addressing men in public. If you take this line you will never get your personality across and never be recognised as living up to your responsibilities. It is up to you to cure yourself of your shyness and rid yourself of your inhibitions.

A leader requires certain basic qualities – courage, robustness, judgement to name three, but it is likely that every [leader] possesses these to some degree otherwise he would not be where he is. But these qualities must be fully recognised by the men, if the necessary confidence is to be there; and in the early days of command a certain amount of showmanship may be required to get these points across. Until you are fully accepted you may have to work harder, expose yourself (not your men) to more risks, take more trouble and show more versatility and endurance than are strictly necessary for the carrying out of your command function. This is in order for you to imprint your personality on your men. The important thing is that when you order your men to do anything tough or risky, they must not have a moment's doubt that you are capable of doing such a task yourself and have probably done so many times before. If they are doubtful you must show them.

In leading men and in war generally, one needs a certain amount of luck, although luck normally comes to those that deserve it and particularly to those who have thought carefully and anticipated most eventualities. Certainly, an officer need not have misgivings about

recognising his luck, because to have the reputation among soldiers of being a lucky commander is one of the highest compliments possible. Once success has come in a unit, whether it be operational success or of another type, it never hurts for a commander to remind men of their past achievements together, and of the benefits obtained under his leadership. Men will only have faith in a leader who himself is confident and has faith in himself.

To sum up, leadership is exercised first and foremost by example, secondly by successful results, thirdly and most importantly by the spoken word in briefing men about the future and reminding them of past achievements and lastly, and to a lesser extent, by the written word. As a leader, you must cultivate all these methods if you are to put across your personality, exercise your leadership and win the men's confidence to the fullest extent.

The young officer who applies the ideas in this booklet should have no difficulty in having a platoon which has a high morale and a healthy self-esteem that they are the best platoon, of the best Battalion, of the best Regiment in the British Army. A Battalion committed to these principles could well be reported on in the words General Sir John Moore used when inspecting the 52nd Regiment in Sicily in 1806:

*"I have the pleasure to observe that this Regiment possesses an excellent spirit and that both officers and men take a pride in doing their duty. Their movement in the field is perfect. It is evident that not only the officers, but that each individual soldier knows perfectly what he has to do. The discipline is carried on without severity. The officers are attached to the men, the men to the officers."*

Questions:

1. Do you agree that a leader needs an element of showmanship? What about the theory of authentic leadership that says you must be your authentic self to lead?
2. Is the role of a leader to build high morale or achieve the mission? Can they clash?
3. It is easy to talk of self-discipline. Is it easy to foster? How do you foster self-discipline?
4. Is this leadership the Green Jacket way or leadership the British Army way? Is there anything you disagree with? How are things done differently in your unit?

*The views expressed in **Leadership Insights** are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official thinking of the British Army or the Ministry of Defence.*