

# Chairing a Tough Meeting

## Before the Meeting:

- ▶ Sit down with appropriate officers and pre-plan the meeting to allow maximum participation from all points of view. Consider the people or the problem objectively and as impersonally as possible.
- ▶ Check PTA sources for existing positions on issues to be discussed. Print up prepared information relevant to the issues and distribute to the group before the meeting begins.
- ▶ Prepare an agenda for the meeting. Include those items you believe can be managed in the time allotted. Have a clear understanding with all concerned that this is what will be dealt with at the meeting.
- ▶ Carefully study Robert's Rules of Order on meeting procedures and motions. If you anticipate a divided audience, review the *Toolkit* for procedures on conducting a ballot vote.



## Meeting Time:

- ▶ Have on hand a copy of the bylaws and Robert's Rules of Order.
- ▶ Distribute the agenda to the membership before the meeting begins and keep to the agenda.
- ▶ Conduct the meeting as formally as you can.
- ▶ Make sure that, as chairman, you are not biased in conducting the meeting.
- ▶ If the group is willing, special "ground rules" for this meeting can be agreed upon at the outset, such as number of times a person may speak to any one item, time limits for all speakers, etc.
- ▶ If such rules are not adopted, the chair can allow the group to rule on time limits during the debate if no motion is on the floor at the time. The chairman also has the privilege to overlook recognizing a speaker who may be dominating the floor in favor of others who may not have spoken.
- ▶ Should the group continue to disagree in such a way that a committee study is warranted; the chair should not hesitate to solicit a motion to create another committee. In selecting its members, those who have expressed strong feeling on the issue should be given responsibility for justifying those feelings by being a part of the study group.
- ▶ Check your bylaws for any limitations or obligations concerning the activity.

Whatever happens, keep your perspective by maintaining neutrality as the chair. Keep your sense of humor and remember that you are not going to settle the war of the worlds.