

## **Milton Fenske**

The formal structure for both educational and religious organizations can be viewed as the written directions as to specified tasks, duties, and behavior of individuals within the organization. An informal structure arises when the formal structure does not include directions as to how a task or issue is to be handled; when written directions are viewed as no longer appropriate and are challenged, in principle, by a significant group of individuals acting contrary to written directions; and when individuals or small groups act contrary to written directions for a variety of personal reasons — philosophical to base.

In education in Canada, structural studies have generally fallen into one of the following three broad areas: Status studies: Knowledge of the formal structures at a point in time have proven useful in the administration of a system.

Evolution of structure studies: These studies have helped to understand how and why organizational structures have changed over time. These studies provide some insight in how to handle and predict change.

Issues within the formal structure: These studies are usually in depth investigations of a controversial issue.

Educational studies may well provide a direction for similar studies within the religious realm. *The Book of Order* and the formal structures for the Moravian Church were established during a period when very few (the clergy) were well educated, with the vast majority of members having limited educational qualifications. Not only have there been significant changes in the

greater society in relation to the societal, political, and economic milieu, but also the membership has significantly improved educational and professional qualifications.

“Church Governance: On bringing ‘politics’ (back) in” is a carefully conceived and developed paper on an issue within the formal structure of governance. While it challenges some of the current *modus operandi* within the organization, this should be viewed as positive and not threatening. Personal experience in observing organizational changes and how individuals “behave” within organizations has led to some general conclusions:

Vigorous debate of issues should not be feared.

Appropriate formal structures must be provided to appropriately discuss issues, or festering wounds will remain.

Some issues require careful and prolonged discussion over time. Sometimes years are required before an issue is fully understood and moves through various stages of change in order to develop reasonable consensus. When action is taken on bare majorities, battle lines tend to form which often spill over into other areas.

If the above are taken into consideration, the chances of consensus developing are greatly enhanced.

Finally some comment on the guidance of “the invisible hand” appears appropriate. The premise that “the invisible hand” provides some guidance is accepted. A question does arise, however, as to whether God is guiding us more when we choose to do little or nothing, or when we undertake open and vigorous debate.

As thinking individuals should we not all do all within our power to resolve issues?

To do little or nothing leaves the determination of acceptable conduct open to a few, perhaps the very few. Are we to accept that the few are the only ones receiving guidance? Religious groups have had some very sad experiences when all were expected to conform to the edicts of the very few.

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## **Lane Sapp**

I am grateful to Brother Atwood for asking me to respond to Neil Thomlinson's provocative article, "Church Governance: On bringing "politics" back in." I use the word "provocative" to describe the article because I found it particularly stimulating, stirring within me a desire to examine in a more critical way the governance of the Moravian Church.

I admit from the outset that my response to this article is from the perspective of one who sincerely believes that the Moravian confessional system of church government, while having its weaknesses, is a style of leadership that can promote a political process that is open and healthy yet ordered and structured. While our structures are not without confusion and fault, their theological underpinning was an avoidance

of a "politics" where authority and power is inappropriately invested in one person. Thus, the Chief Elder experience of 1741 where Christ was declared as the one who would, by his Spirit, govern the church through a consultative structure, still seems normative for us today. Does it need review and "tweaking" periodically to adapt itself to a changing culture? Certainly!

At first, I found myself "balking" at Brother Thomlinson's use of the word politics when referring to church governance. In our day with a nation clearly polarized and divided by "red" and "blue" states, the notion that the church should be more "political" brought to my mind the images we often see in seats of local and national governance where an attitude of "drawing a line in the sand" seems dominant. However, after reading Thomlinson's definition of politics as given by Hesoid ("how shall a man order his ways") I understood more clearly Thomlinson's first argument, "that most of the current problems are not so much the result of shortcomings in the formal structure, as of lay people neglecting our political responsibilities." He goes on to write, "the problem — in the Moravian Church in North American society is that we have failed to nurture a population of capable voters."

I say, "ditto, Brother!" As I see it, one of the problems with our confessional system of church government is our failure to properly educate the laity about our structure. In that sense, we have neglected our politics if politics in its truest sense understands how we order ourselves. I've often heard clergy say that they do not see much need in offering educational sessions on church government. "That's not where people are," or