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CHAPTER FOUR
LEADERSHIP AND FOLLOWERSHIP

INTRODUCTION

4.1. This chapter explains leadership and followership as a partnership. The chapter recognises followership as an ethical concept, characterised by responsible consent and distinguished by notions of honour and self-discipline.

FOLLOWERSHIP IS AN ETHICAL CONCEPT

4.2. **Followership is an ethical concept and followers should be ethical people.** Followership describes the concept of following ethically, not passively. The concept is crucial because, regardless of rank, everyone in the Navy is a follower to some degree.

4.3. **Followership should exemplify professionalism in service under arms.** Following carries with it ethical obligations, which prevent blind obedience or ethical laziness. Followership is not subservient or unassertive.

4.4. **Followership exists in partnership with leadership.** Leadership is not domination. Leadership is about ‘power with,’ not ‘power over’.¹ The days when the ‘power of command’ was mistaken for leadership are over, if indeed they ever existed. In the same way, followership is recognised now as much more than blind obedience or ethical laziness. Followership and leadership exist in an ethical partnership, based on professional understanding and mutual respect.

4.5. To share the obligations and responsibilities of an ethical partnership with leadership, followers need to be ethically dependable. **Followers need to be ethically strong:** they need to tell people the truth, to give sound advice and honest opinion. Followers should not evade the truth. Telling people what they want to hear, rather than what they need to hear is nothing short of cowardice.

¹ ADDP 00.6 para 2.36, 3.5
² ADDP 00.6 para. 1.20
4.6. Followership depends upon conscience. Followers should act responsibly, in good conscience and with moral courage. Ethical followership is obedient, *not servile or mindlessly compliant*. Followers stand up for what is right. Were a follower to have strong reservations or ethical concerns, then these should be candidly and respectfully expressed. Followers should not fall down on matters of principle.

4.7. **Followership is loyal.** Leaders may make decisions with which followers disagree. In this case, followers will make representation with tact and, where appropriate, in confidence. Yet, unless circumstances cause a conscientious objection, followers will respect the perspective which the leader brings to a decision, and the responsibility which the leader bears alone. Followers should not undermine leadership.

4.8. **Loyalty is reciprocal,** it is not a means of gaining advantage, and not a means of defending oneself. This means that unscrupulous seniors should never exploit the loyalty of followers. Neither should any follower rely upon ‘unquestioning loyalty’ as a defence or excuse for improper action. Loyalty is a two way street, it is not a justification for subservience, and not an obligation borne by junior ranking people alone.

4.9. **Loyalty is cultivated by trust,** by mutual respect and by resilience in hard times. Loyal people give honest opinions courteously, and with good will. Loyal people take care not to damage the reputation or character of others. Loyal people appreciate that speaking poorly of others is not ‘plain speaking,’ or a ‘courageous display of integrity’. Speaking poorly of others is ill-disciplined gossip which undermines leadership, unit cohesion and *esprit de corps*. 