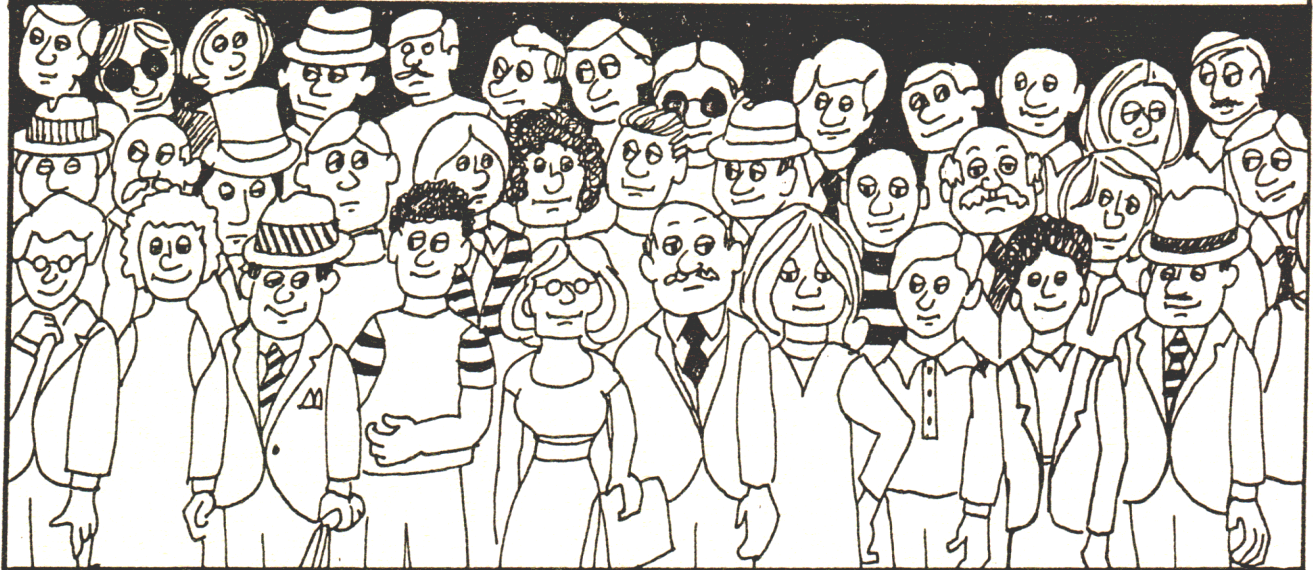


who decides...?



POWER in the Community

by Manfred Thullen

*Extension Specialist, Community Development, Department of
Resource Development*

INTRODUCTION

POWER — who has it, who uses it to shape the future of the community, who really makes the decisions that affect your life — is an enduring concern for those who become community leaders and for those who are led. Cornell University political scientist, Alan Hahn, discovered that the proportion of citizens who choose to participate is usually small and that the decision makers are a very small minority of the eligible adults of any community. In his research on community decision making, Hahn revealed that generally:

- Less than 5 percent of the eligible adult population is **actively and directly involved** in community decision making. These are the people

who run for elective office, are actively involved in community boards and commissions, regularly attend boards and commissions and participate in decision-making deliberations.

- Only 20 to 25 percent of eligible adults **vote and engage** in some community decision-making activities. These are the people who occasionally attend community board or commission meetings, who occasionally write or call their elected officials, who play volunteer roles for candidates for elective offices and so on.
- Another 20 to 25 percent of adults **vote** only and do **not involve** themselves in any other community decision-making activities.