

A WORKING PHILOSOPHY OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

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I

It's a good idea, every now and then, to sit back and take stock of ourselves, to see where we've been and where we're going. This is particularly important for those of us who are working in the field of personnel administration.

As my last official act as an officer of the Industrial Relations Association of Chicago, I would like to outline some of my own thinking as to the proper role of personnel management in the modern business organization, and to suggest some of the lines along which, it appears to me, personnel thinking and practice may be profitably directed. In a word, I shall try to indicate at least the broad outlines of "A Working Philosophy of Personnel Management."

To make any sense at all, a working philosophy of personnel management must be part and parcel of a working philosophy of management in general. Let us consider for a moment, therefore, some of the things that are happening in the field of management and the significance of these developments for personnel administration as such.

The task of management has changed considerably during the past fifty years. During the nineteenth century, the great problems of management were those concerned with physical production and distribution. There was a continent to be occupied, railroads to be built, natural resources to be developed, productive capacity to be provided. Closely related to these were the problems of securing capital for a rapidly expanding economy, and the tasks of creating distributive channels capable of handling the vast increase in physical output. Given these

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circumstances, it was natural that management's attention should be largely preoccupied with matters of production, finance, and sales. And it was inevitable that the production man, the financier, and the salesman should occupy the key positions in industry and that business thinking and practice should bear the impress of their special points of view. Men like Henry Ford, J. P. Morgan, Julius Rosenwald, and Marshall Field, were the great geniuses of this era, for they offered solutions to the basic problems of management at that time.

The major challenge to management today is not production. Neither is it finance or distribution. All of these offer continuing problems, but not crucial problems. We have the skills and the administrative machinery and we have an adequate conceptual framework in which to exercise these skills and operate this machinery, to meet any demands which are likely to occur in these areas for some time to come. The really great task confronting management today is that of maintaining the kind of teamwork and cooperation within the organization that will keep the wheels of industry turning. It is in this area that modern management is finding its most difficult problems and where progressive management is devoting an increasing share of its energy and thought.

It is only too apparent that our productive machinery, for all its undoubted excellence, is working at only a fraction of its potential capacity. Our skill in human relations has failed to keep pace with our growing technical skills, with the result that our economy has been able to benefit only partially from the magnificent technical advances of the past fifty years.

In fact, as the history of these past fifty years makes painfully clear, simultaneously with these technical advances there has gone a steady decline in the willingness of employees to cooperate effectively with management in achieving the economic aims of the enterprise. This is not so much because worker resistance has seriously impeded the introduction of technical improvements,

although this unquestionably has created difficulties in certain lines of work. Much more serious has been the extent to which the advance of technology itself has undermined the very foundation of teamwork and cooperation.

It is not too much to say that the survival of our society as we know it will depend in very large part on management's ability to re-establish conditions of effective cooperation. This - not production, finance, or distribution - is the basic problem of management today. And this is the area where, if we in personnel are worth our salt, we can make a tremendously valuable contribution, not only to our managements, but to the health and survival of our democratic system.

## II

With a task of this magnitude before us, it is distressing to observe some of the current trends in personnel thinking. Particularly distressing is the effort, in certain circles, to establish personnel as a "profession." To my mind, this effort has some very dangerous implications.

In the first place, we must never lose sight of the fact that, to be effective, the basis of personnel administration must be the individual business organization. In this respect personnel differs radically from such recognized professions as medicine and the law. The objective of the personnel administrator should be closer and more effective integration with his own organization. His role is quite different from that of the company medical director or general counsel.

I do not deny that professional workers have a place in the personnel field. We stand in great need of the services of psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and other professionally trained people. One of the important

tasks of modern personnel management is to learn how to utilize more effectively the contributions professionals such as these are prepared to make.

Neither do I deny that there are specialized bodies of knowledge and specialized systems and techniques which should be the common property of those engaged in the practice of personnel management. Another great task of modern personnel administration is to expand this knowledge and to refine these systems and techniques so that they can be more useful in dealing with the problems we face.

The point I am trying to make is simply that the effort to establish personnel as a "profession" tends to separate the personnel function from the organization which it has been set up to serve. Sooner or later, loyalty to the "profession" is likely to come into conflict with loyalty to the organization. And in any event, the frame of reference for the personnel administrator should be his own organization and its needs and problems, and not the abstract entity of an occupational classification.

If our objective is to carve out a comfortable and not too demanding a niche for ourselves in the business world, we can follow the path of "professionalization." If we do so, we will wind up as specialized consultants to business management, but without real influence or stature.

Much more rewarding will be a realistic and intelligent effort to concentrate more wholeheartedly on the task of understanding our own organizations and achieving closer integration with them. "Professionalism" represents movement in a contrary direction - a direction which makes effective integration more difficult and ultimately, perhaps, impossible.

This yearning for "professional" status is not only fundamentally wrong;

it is also evidence of what a social scientist would be likely to describe as "status anxiety" - a condition which apparently is rather widespread among workers in the personnel field. It has been my experience, in fact, that personnel people as a group are likely to be more frustrated and more beset by feelings of insecurity than most other occupational groups. I strongly suspect that in many cases the interest in "professionalism" represents, basically, an effort to achieve status and recognition outside the business organization that has not been achieved within it.

This is particularly clear in the functioning of certain types of personnel associations, especially those in which the basis of membership is the individual personnel worker rather than the business firm in which he is employed. Very often, in meetings and other activities of such associations, people act out for their own and each other's benefit roles of dignity and status which they can play only partially or unsatisfactorily in their own organizations. Such play-acting may provide temporarily satisfying outlets for desires and aspirations which they have not developed the skill to satisfy along more legitimate and more effective lines.

The point I am trying to make is that the concern for "professionalization" absorbs interest and energies that could be much better exerted in other directions. It represents, in fact, a kind of behavior that is closely akin to what psychiatrists would describe as "neurotic." It is an effort to achieve substitute satisfactions instead of coming to grips with real problems - and being blinded to the existence of real problems by the illusory and temporary sense of well-being which the substitute satisfactions provide.

Another revealing indication of status anxieties among personnel workers is their almost universal plea for "more authority." Whenever several personnel people get together - particularly when they get together informally and under cir-

cumstances where they feel they can "let their hair down" - the talk is likely to turn to such topics as the bull-headed stubbornness of line supervisors and the need for more authority to compel them to follow good personnel practices. Many such conversations also turn, sooner or later, to the lack of enlightenment on the part of higher management and the difficulty they (the personnel people) find in getting support - moral and financial - for the kind of program they feel is needed. If only they had more scope and authority, the argument goes, all this could be corrected and personnel could occupy a respected and influential place in the business hierarchy.

In their efforts to win such a place, personnel administrators are likely to become overly concerned with "selling." The feeling is, that if they can only "package" their programs effectively, if they can only present them forcefully and dramatically, if they can only get more "sell" into their activities, they will meet with more success. Not only is there concern for "selling" the higher levels of management; the tendency is particularly apparent in the approach very often taken in trying to get things across to the line organization. Hence the great preoccupation with the "art of presentation," with conference techniques, visual aids, and other devices calculated to convince and persuade an apathetic or reluctant audience. One suspects that, in a great many cases, more attention is given to the form of presentation than to the content of what is presented.

I submit that the essential skill of the personnel man should be the very opposite of "selling" as that term is generally conceived. Too often, what we attempt to sell is something we have developed. Admittedly, we have developed it for the good of those to whom we are trying to sell it. But generally it is our own idea of what the organization needs, and it may or may not coincide with what the organization thinks it needs. Very often, the reason so much "selling" is necessary is that some means must be found to convince the organization that it

needs something the personnel man has decided it needs.

Rather than skill in this kind of "selling", the essential skill of the personnel man should be that of working with the people in his organization, assisting them to think through their own problems, helping them to accomplish tasks which they might not be able to accomplish as effectively without his aid. In a sense, the task of the personnel man should be to help liberate the energies and capacities of the organization, to help the organization deal better with the problems it faces. But throughout, the effort must be to understand the organization's aims, the organization's needs, the organization's problems. And the program as finally developed must be the organization's program, not the personnel department's idea of what the program ought to be.

Personnel programs developed in this way don't have to be sold. Neither do they have to be fortified by complicated arrangements and controls to assure necessary follow-through. Those who developed them will see that they are carried out - not because someone has persuaded them to do so, but because they want to, because they have a natural interest in carrying out a program which they themselves have helped to build.

Basically, the process involved is that of participation. Participation is a favorite word nowadays among personnel people, and there's probably not a man or woman in this room but who subscribes wholeheartedly to the idea that participation is a very desirable thing. Some of the best "selling" efforts I have seen, in fact, have been supervisory training programs aimed at training foremen in how to improve worker participation in their departments. But how much did the foremen themselves participate in developing the participation program? Usually very little.

But if participation is good for foremen, it is good for us in personnel. It is good for us in working with line executives, and it is good for us in working with top management. We would do well to be less concerned with having all the

good ideas ourselves - and pushing those ideas onto the rest of the organization. We should be more concerned with bringing out the good ideas of the organization - and helping put those good ideas into effect. Our aim should be to help the organization analyze its own needs and work out its own programs. Therein lies our best hope of achieving the status and wielding the influence we are seeking.

I feel very strongly that the time has come when we must discard some of the unimportant concerns that clutter up our work. We must stop spending so much of our time and energy on the basically non-essential task of selling ourselves, of developing programs largely for the purpose of gaining personal recognition, of handling management "cute" ideas and neatly wrapped "packages" that contribute little to the organization.

If personnel administration is to grow up, we in personnel must begin now to measure up to our responsibilities as mature members of the management staff. Too many of us, in the past, have stood outside the inner management circle, watching the "older boys" have all the fun, while we made vain and wistful overtures to get into the game. Too many of us have been willing to accept a "junior" role in the organization because of the feeling on our part (which our superiors are likely to reflect) that most of the important work was being done by others. Too many of us - let us face it - have been happy just to be tolerated by management rather than respected for what we can contribute to the organization.

Much of the dissatisfaction we so frequently express about the role and status of personnel management is a direct consequence of our own failure to properly visualize our jobs and our own inability to relate ourselves effectively to our organizations. If we want our managements to take our jobs seriously, we must take them seriously ourselves - which means less concern with the frills and superficialities, less concern with the trappings of status, and more concern with helping

management in its efforts to build a sounder, a more effective, and a more cooperative organization.

### III

There is one phase of personnel relations about which personnel people have no difficulty in securing top management interest. This is the matter of unionism. If the company is unorganized, management is likely to want to keep it that way. If it is organized, what happens at the bargaining table - and indeed the whole character of union-management relationship - is of great concern to management. In either case, the union movement has had a profound influence on personnel administration. On the one hand, it has given personnel a function of great importance in management's eyes, and has therefore been a means for helping elevate its status. On the other hand, the pressing nature of the union problem has often consumed so much of the personnel man's time and management's time that other phases of the personnel job have been neglected. In some cases, I suspect, we ourselves have contributed to this imbalance through capitalizing too liberally on the threat of unionization or the exigencies of collective bargaining in our efforts to sell ourselves or our programs to higher management.

That many organizations have a serious imbalance in this respect is a matter of common knowledge. The seriousness of this imbalance can be illustrated by a historical reference.

Aside from the building trades, railroads were the first important industry in this country to be thoroughly unionized. The process was substantially complete by the time of the first World War, the period in which personnel administration first began to emerge in industry generally as a distinct management function. Since that time, personnel has made great strides. But significantly, even to this day, it has never developed beyond a rudimentary stage in the railroad

industry. There are exceptions, but they are few. Strenuous efforts are being made by certain roads to correct the deficiencies of the past, but there is a tremendous weight of inertia to overcome, and progress is painfully slow. The same kind of thing has happened in other industries which were thoroughly organized prior to the developemnt of personnel. In all cases, the compelling fact of collective bargaining apparently blinded management to the need of doing a good personnel job over and above the need of doing a good collective bargaining job. The assumption apparently was that to the extent that problems of personnel and human relations became important, they would be disposed of around the bargaining table. As a result, management abdicated its responsibilities in this area and the unions assumed them through default. At this late date, management can recover them only with the greatest difficulty.

A somewhat similar development could take place today in other industries than the railroads. To some extent, it has already taken place in some of our own organizations. Whereas personnel administration never developed in the railroad industry because of the smothering influence of collective bargaining, it may atrophy for precisely similar reasons in some other industries where it is now well-established. I have used the term "smothering influence" - but if smothering has taken place, or if it does yet take place, it will be because management has permitted the smothering. And some of the positive, constructive things that good personnel administration has to offer are even now in process of being smothered by too exclusive concentration on matters of unionism and too little attention to the needs of a well-rounded, well-balanced, over-all personnel program.

Good personnel and human relations are matters of concern at all times. But if anything, concern for them should be even greater after unionization than before, if for no other reason than that the presence of the union makes the achievement of such relations more difficult. We cannot allow the personnel function to atrophy. We need to deal effectively with the problems created by unionism. But

we also need to deal effectively with all the other aspects of the relationships between people in a business enterprise. It is essential that management retain its leadership and initiative in all phases of employee relations. Not to do so will create a leadership vacuum into which others, not too well disposed toward management, are bound to step.

#### IV

In one important respect, this lack of proper balance between union relations and the rest of the personnel job has consequences similar to the concern for "professionalization," the desire for "more authority," and our penchant for "selling ourselves" that I spoke about earlier: all of them tend to obscure from us the real tasks and the great opportunities which lie before us. Why lose ourselves in the conflicts of unionism and the intricacies of bargaining? Why concern ourselves with the barren rewards of a fake "professionalism," or the empty trappings of status, or the delusions of "authority"? We have bigger, more important things to do.

Ours is the task of helping American business management meet one of the great challenges of history. At one level of consideration, that challenge is developing better teamwork and cooperation between management and employees. At another level of consideration, that challenge is learning how to deal with the vast collectivities that have grown out of modern technology, and at the same time preserve individual integrity, adaptivity, and character. In a word, the problem is learning how to adapt the fundamental democratic ideals of our society to the realities of modern life.

The survival of human freedom is more in jeopardy today than ever before in the history of this country. This is not so much because of the threat of Soviet Russia or of other autocratic influences, domestic or foreign. It is primarily because of the threat of certain tendencies within our own society - particularly trends in the field of economic organization.

The question is, how are we to preserve the essentials of human freedom within the framework of modern industrial society, a society characterized by huge organizations, by machine production, by impersonal, institutionalized management-worker relationships; how to fit men and women to the requirements of large-scale production without sacrificing their individualities and basic freedoms?

In the simple, agrarian society of Jefferson's day, political freedom was enough because, to a large extent, political freedom meant economic freedom as well. But as economic relations have grown more complex, political freedom alone has grown more and more inadequate. Political freedom as such has less and less bearing on the way a man makes his living. Political freedom is the starting point, the foundation, but political freedom alone is not enough in a world of complex social organization. Under modern conditions, political freedom, to be more than an empty phrase, must be supplemented by economic freedom.

I would like to explore briefly certain aspects of the problem of economic freedom within the framework of modern business organization. Business as such is not the only area within which this problem must be worked out, but it is probably the most important.

Without necessarily subscribing to theories of economic determinism, it is nevertheless clear that the ways men make their living have a profound influence on all aspects of their living. Industrial experience can stimulate the development of human potentials - or it can stultify growth and stifle the human spirit. Industrial organization can enrich and embellish individuality - or it can degrade men and women to dull and common levels of mediocrity. Industrial practice can strengthen the under-pinnings of democracy - or it can riddle them to a hollow shell that will crumble at the first severe blow.

The record of American business in these respects is rather mixed. It is better than the record of European business. It is better than it has often been given credit for. But it could have been better than it was. And it needs to become better than it is.

V

A large part of our task is that of developing a more adequate science of management. The development of such a science represents one of the great opportunities of modern personnel administration. Many of the problems with which we are presently concerned are traceable directly to the influence of so-called "scientific management" as originally developed by Frederick Taylor and subsequently refined by a host of followers.

Significantly, Taylor and most of his disciples were engineers. They approached the problems of human organization in the same way they had been trained to approach the problems of machine design. In so doing, they transferred the engineers' mode of thinking to a field for which it was never intended, with consequences that in some cases have been little short of disastrous.

These consequences can be clearly seen in Taylor's ideas about the functionalization of work - ideas which were central to his entire system and which are basic to the modern versions of scientific management. Functionalization, of course, consists in breaking jobs down into their simplest possible elements, and then grouping similar functions together - precisely as one might design the inter-relations between component parts of a piece of mechanical equipment. This procedure was (and is) supposed to speed output through specialization, to provide better supervision and closer control, and to permit the use of persons of lesser skill (and thus of lower cost).

As a consequence of these efforts, work processes have been vastly simplified, activities serialized, and jobs broken down into elemental components.

A great many jobs have simplified to the point where they have been taken over by machines, and the workers themselves have to a large extent come to be looked upon, in the apt phrase of Peter Drucker, as "rather imperfect machine tools."

But the worst aspects of functionalization are seen in Taylor's efforts to separate the "thinking" part of the job from the "doing" parts. Many elements which had formerly been integral parts of jobs were lopped off and transferred to a "planning department." It was Taylor's consistent effort, as he phrased it, "to learn the content of the worker's skill." In his own words, he sought to appropriate to management "all the great mass of traditional knowledge which in the past has been in the heads of workmen and in the physical skill and knack of the workmen." The cornerstone of Taylor's system was that management was to do all the thinking and planning, down to the minutest detail. The worker was to be given specific, detailed instructions as to exactly what he was to do and precisely how he was to do it.

A fitting comment on the consequences of this kind of management practice was made recently by Alexander Heron when he wrote:

"We cannot have a healthy industrial organism composed of separate groups of workers and thinkers. We cannot expect teamwork from 90% of the team if we insist on telling them that their function is to work, ours to think."

Another consequence of scientific management can be seen in connection with the problem of "participation." Current management literature is greatly concerned over the need for greater employee participation, and many are the learned discourses that have appeared in recent years on how to develop more effective participation. We do a lot of talking about enlisting worker interest, getting worker's ideas, and so on. These are things that everybody believes in. Why then, do we accomplish so little?

It takes more than management-labor committees, more than suggestion

systems to secure real participation. These are little more than unsatisfactory, mechanical substitutes for the real thing. It takes more than exhortation, more than supervisory training, more than declarations of principles and intent.

Basically, the problem lies in the fact that through over-functionalization and the practices that have accompanied it, business has systematically deprived employes of real and effective participation in economic processes. Until this condition is corrected, we shall not be able to get very far in our efforts to enlist worker interest, or to make them feel that they are a vital and significant part of the productive organization.

Another serious consequence of over-functionalization is its tendency to enforce the conception of people as means rather than as ends in themselves. On the one hand, the tendency toward over-functionalization arises from this type of conception. On the other hand, over-functionalization, over established, makes it impossible to deal with people on any other basis than as means. Individual activities no longer have meaning or significance in themselves, and those who perform such activities have no value except as means for helping to accomplish the broader, over-all tasks to which the whole organization is devoted.

Over-functionalization makes more general and more acute one of the common errors of our times - the error of dealing with people by categories rather than as individuals. People are catagorized by status and function rather than as reasonably well-rounded persons; they become "hands," not "people." Despite our protestations about the importance of the individual, over-functionalization makes it extremely difficult, and often impossible, actually to think of people as individuals, much less deal with them on individual terms.

The attempt to use people as means rather than as ends has alienated them from unity with management in the productive process. Their own labor becomes to them likewise a means: something alien to their real purposes and

interests; something through which to procure the good things of life, rather than a good in itself; something to be given sparingly, as a cost.

This disparaging, "necessary evil" concept of labor is implicit in socialist and communist theories, and explicit in many of the practices of organized labor. One of the important reasons why this is so lies in the fact that business, under the influence of scientific management, has consistently acted in such a manner as to deprive labor of much of its creative relationship with work.

## VI

All of this has profound significance for the preservation of the essentials of democracy. Democracy depends on strong, self-reliant individuals, people who are capable of handling their own problems. It is a tragic fact that the methods of business organization have greatly increased the psychological dependency of members of business organizations - workers and executives alike. Through over-protection, over-specialization, and over-rigidity, business has very often hindered the processes of individual growth and development.

Over-functionalization in particular has hindered the ability of people to handle their own problems effectively. Because of the very nature of functionalization, a great many problems at the work place can only be handled by resort to higher authority - for instance, to higher levels of supervision or management. Workers, foremen, staff people, etc., work at such narrow, specialized tasks that they have effective control over only a few of the elements which affect their jobs. When problems arise, they must go to someone high enough up in the organization to be able to act on the situation. As a result, authority rather than mature self-reliance and a sense of personal responsibility comes to be looked upon as the natural means for dealing with problems.

Under these circumstances, it has been inevitable that large masses of workers (as well, let me repeat, as executives) have developed the characteristics

of emotional and psychological dependence. It should not be surprising that many of them look about for someone on whom to lean, someone who can provide magical solutions to their problems, leaders who can point the way out - or, in more purely psychological terms, someone who can play the role of the good father and resolve the difficulty for his children.

This is a role that management is poorly suited to play, and large numbers of employes have turned to others - usually politicians and labor leaders. This kind of solution not only creates difficulties for management, but is usually not very effective for the workers. Union organization or political action may provide a palliative but they cannot touch the heart of the problem, and in the long run they are likely to create greater problems than those they were intended to solve.

I am not trying to quarrel with unions, or with any political program, Republican or Democratic. I am simply concerned with the problem of strengthening individual freedom and integrity. This is a problem that must be dealt with at the work place and largely in terms of the way work is organized and the relation of the worker to his work. This is a problem which is simply beyond the reach of "political" solutions - whether governmental, union, or otherwise. This is a problem which was largely created by business management, and in a very real sense only business management can solve it.

In this connection, it is significant to note the close affinity between the welfare state, managerial paternalism, and certain elements of trade unionism. Each is distinctly authoritarian. In each case, external authority seeks to determine what people need and what they should want - and this applies to certain managements, certain politicians, and certain unions. The common element in all three cases is that the effort to provide benefits is essentially an effort to bribe. The basic attitude is one of contempt for people. People are seen as hew-

ers of wood or casters of ballots; objects to be enticed, cajoled, and if necessary coerced into serving the needs of authority. People are not seen as creatures with their own rights, aspirations, and potentialities. They are seen as means to support and serve authority - whether governmental, industrial, or union.

## VII

These are some of the problems American business management is facing today. They are problems which lie in the area of special competence and responsibility of personnel managers.

Part of the solution lies in developing a more adequate science of management, because many of our present difficulties are a direct consequence of the errors and misconceptions of "scientific management". We need a science of management that will not have the weaknesses implicit in the effort to apply engineering concepts to human organization, but which will make a consistent effort to integrate the findings and the special contributions of the various branches of the social sciences.

Important beginnings have already been made along this line, but a great deal more needs to be done. Any adequate science of management must be a science of human organization. For this reason, it is essential that full use be made of the bodies of knowledge and the special insights of the social scientists who are studying various aspects of the problems of human organization. More than that: business must assist such scientists, not merely by financial support (although that, too, is important) but by presenting itself for closer study so that a larger portion of scientific effort may be channeled along lines of greater usefulness to practicing business administrators. Cooperation between universities and business for these purposes is being encouraged by such organizations as the Industrial Relations Center of the University of Chicago and by similar institutions elsewhere in the country.

The growth and wide popularity of so-called "human relations" is en-

couraging. It represents an effort on management's part to secure a better understanding of what is going on within its organization and to develop higher orders of skill for dealing with its immediate and long-range problems.

But in this connection, I would like to voice a special word of warning. There has been a tendency, in the last few years, to allow "human relations" to degenerate into a sort of "be nice to the guy" school of thought. Being "nice" to people is all well and good, but is not enough. Sometimes management has to do things that are painful to people, and if its only hold on people consists in having been "nice" to them, it will not retain their loyalty or support for very long. Under such circumstances, in fact, people are quite likely to look around for someone else who promises to be "nice" to them. This "be nice to people" version of human relations is brittle indeed. It will not stand up against a blow of any real severity, and it will be repudiated by people and discarded by management with very little ceremony.

Any realistic science or philosophy of management must be tough-minded. There is a place in it for sentiment but not for sentimentality. It must be founded on fundamental Christian ideals, but like Christianity itself it must be mistake the easy life for the good life.

In a very real and special sense, the preservation of our democratic way of life depends on the skill and foresight with which management handles its problems of human relations. We in personnel have a great opportunity and a great responsibility for assisting management in this task. We shall be foolish indeed if we allow ourselves to be sidetracked by issues of little moment.

As a group, I am afraid we have leaned too long on the crutch of blaming higher management for our failure to make the kind of progress we would like to make. Someday that crutch may slip from our grasp and reveal our basic weakness. That day, in fact, may not be too far distant. The aims and interests of

large segments of management may already be well ahead of our ability to produce positive, constructive personnel programs.

I am very much impressed by the manner in which influential elements within American management are seeking to deal with the pressing problems of our times. A particularly significant event occurred only three weeks ago when the Corning Glass Works, to celebrate its Centennial, sponsored a Conference on the theme, "Living in an Industrial Civilization." I was fortunate enough to attend this meeting, and I can testify to the realism and maturity - but, withal, the imagination and creative insight - with which this knotty theme was attacked. There are other straws in the wind, of which the activities of the American Management Association and the editorial policy of Fortune Magazine are particularly interesting as indications of the lines along which management is thinking today.

There is something very basic, something very creative, going on within the ranks of American management. Management is rising to its historic responsibilities in a manner that augurs extremely well for the future. Our task as personnel administrators is to assist management - as, by and large, only we can assist it - in its efforts to work out, in practical, realistic terms, the means for making industrial society the good society. Anything less than this will be tragically short of our historic challenge and our historic opportunity.