



Institutional Administration

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THE TITLE OF THIS PAPER is somewhat misleading if it implies that what follows is concerned primarily with hospitals and orphanages. Neither is it concerned primarily with trends, but rather with a statement of administrative principles thought to be applicable to the special situations under study. It starts with the elements which all types of administrative organizations have in common. Since other papers in this series are concerned with specific topics, some of the deductions from the general scheme will be left to the reader to make for himself.

The onset of contemporary thinking about management problems is marked roughly by the publication of Mary Parker Follett's *Creative Experience*.¹ When she wrote, administration, or management, was considered to be largely a matter of impersonal technique. Both the external, or political, relationships of agencies and their internal operation were treated formally and statically as matters of technique and structure. The point of departure today is to treat administration as a matter of interpersonal relationships, as the reference to Ivan Belknap shows.² The climax of this development is the treatment of administrative organizations analytically as social systems as in the works of C. I. Barnard³ and H. A. Simon.⁴ With respect to internal relations there is no question that the trend of managerial opinion has followed that of writing in the field. Managerial institutes and human relations courses flourish. It is not possible to know whether practice has been as strongly influenced as opinion. What is presented here is the current state of doctrine.

In discussing any administrative organization it is useful to make a distinction between the internal and external aspects of organizations. All organizations have memberships which are made up immediately of their officers and paid staff, and ultimately, in the view of some

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writers, of their customers or the users of their service.³ In the almost universal patterns of private as well as public administration the full-time career staff is legally accountable to a person or a group who represents the public, or the stockholders, or the original incorporators. The formally prescribed pattern of responsibility among these persons is the organization's structure.

Administrative organizations have not only structure but relationships. They exist through an interchange of services between each organization as a whole and its environment, and between the organization and its staff. Control in any organization lies with those who determine the terms of these dual exchange relationships; who determine what the organization will produce and what it will receive, what the staff will produce and what it will get in return. These are critical decisions since inducements for the staff must come out of the organization's receipts from the external world. Formal responsibility for control is usually vested in the body which represents the public or the stockholders; the full-time paid head of the staff is usually regarded as its agent. Together the full-time head and the representative body constitute the control group.⁵

The relations between this group and the environment of the agency are the dominant features of its external aspect. The external relationships imposed by law or custom determine whether the agency is self-contained, whether it has independent revenues, free of the necessity of dependence on appropriations or of finding a market for its services. Public agencies are self-contained, or autonomous, which have segregated revenues and coopting boards. Private agencies which depend on the uncertain income of contributions or fees are scarcely so. Therefore, there are several categories into which institutions may be divided according to their external aspect: public and private, and, independently of these, autonomous or dependent. Such distinctions do not necessarily indicate radically different conditions of administration, however. Some problems they have in common, and others vary in degree rather than in kind.

It is the terms of the exchange between the institution and its environment, rather than the form of its structure, which determines the policies and procedures it follows. These terms are defined by the things which the institution must receive in order to exist, and from whom and on what terms these things are available. In a city-manager city, where the city manager appoints the librarian, public acceptance of the library and its services may be such as to give the library staff

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virtually a free hand in determining service, subject to income limitations. The interposition of a library board, which appoints the librarian—an arrangement usually regarded as leading to independence—may make the library the servant of the community group from which the board members come. As Oliver Garceau shows, such boards may be virtually coopting, even though formally appointed by the political head of the city, and they may be not at all responsive to those to whom that head owes his election.⁶ A university librarian is chosen by the president and trustees, who also appoint the teaching staff. Yet the teaching and research staff, who cannot control the president who selects the librarian, nevertheless have a considerable influence on library policy. In each case the formal structure does not indicate what the institution must have in order to survive, nor who controls it.

Money is a principal need for any administrative organization, and differences in the terms on which it is available are probably the most important differences to be found between institutions. But more than this is needed for institutional operation; there must be a using clientele, necessary professional and nonprofessional services, which money alone will not always buy, and the prestige and recognition which come from being associated with a respected institution. The conditions on which these are available from the external world are those to which the policy of the organization must be adjusted.

The conditions of support not only influence policy; they determine the points in the organization at which policy will be made. A public library with an active and vocal clientele, which is well satisfied with services, and anxious only that they be expanded, need not be overly concerned about its relationships with a city council. The identity of outlook, and of interest if you will, between the library staff and the public makes the library staff a political force and permits it to initiate policy. A library with an inactive clientele may be at the mercy of a board for which the library is a source of satisfactions quite irrelevant to official library goals. As noted above such a board may be the servant of the community group from which its members come rather than representative of the whole community. Recognition by their peers is the satisfaction they seek, and it is the point of reference from which they judge library policy.⁶ In their view a genealogical collection, or one on local history, may seem more important than children's services.

These considerations make the usual statements about the proper relations between the professional staff and lay control groups some-

what irrelevant.⁷⁻¹⁰ The question is less what definition of relationships ought to be set up than what relationships will be established in the particular circumstances. The advantage of the usual definitions of the respective functions of professional services and lay members of boards of control is that they constitute a sort of Platonic myth to persuade recruits coming into a given system that it is legitimate. If those who govern libraries can be brought to the belief that there are areas of professional decision with which they should not tamper, the doctrine is effective, unless there is a stronger countervailing force. Further, the professional group has bargaining power if its services are regarded as essential. If persons of a desired specialty can be hired only on certain terms, these are the terms which will prevail.

Although there are deliberately created divisions between what are regarded as lay and as professional concerns, there is no natural division of administrative decisions between policy matters and technical matters, nor among technique, goal, and value, by which to regulate the relations of career professionals and lay representatives.^{11, 12} It is not the objective content of the decisions which determines whether they should be made by the professional staff at its discretion, or by a representative body in consultation with professional subordinates; it is a question of the emotions which cluster about the point at issue, of what persons are concerned about it, and of its meaning to them in terms of their future relations to the institution. It is difficult to anticipate the points around which emotions will surge and what persons and groups will thereby battle.

Issues which have become emotionally charged must be classed as policy matters, whatever their standing otherwise as points of technique and not of substance. They cannot be considered without reference to those on whom the library depends for its support. This is not to suggest that matters of principle should be subordinated to the requirements of organizational or personal survival, but only that decisions of such grave import should be recognized for what they are.¹¹

Whatever the form of library organization and whatever the disposition of its supporting clientele, the professional staff will always have a large responsibility for the determination of library objectives. It is not safe to assume, however, that the professional staff can afford to function as a self-contained entity which can work in disregard of forces outside of the library walls.

The questions which must be faced in the decision of policy questions are: in view of their cost, what support is there for these objec-

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tives, and whose support is necessary to a favorable decision; what price can be paid in terms of the other objectives, which may have to be abandoned if these are to be won^{12, 13}

The term "disposition of the clientele" has been used in this discussion. The analogy is spatial; it is intended to mean the goals to which the various library clienteles are attached and how these groups are related to the governing machinery. Capable management requires that staff goals be negotiated in relation to clientele goals so as to secure the maximum possible support of a defensible program without too much attention to the niceties of what is a professional question and what is not. In summary the problem of institution-clientele relations, or of staff-board relations, is one of winning support for a program rather than of establishing an area within which administrative discretion is unquestioned.¹³

If negotiation and management of contending forces are the characteristic of the external relations of a library or of any other institution, they are not absent in its internal operations. Nor can internal operations be separated from external. The staff of the institution must produce the services on which the life of the institution depends in interaction with each other and with the external world.

From the standpoint of internal relations, organizations staffed with professional persons have some special characteristics. A large part of the staff identifies itself with the profession within whose competence the functions fall. Its members therefore take and feel justified in taking an independent view of the goals and methods of the organization.¹⁴ Despite the unifying element of professional training and standards, they are divided among operations constituting specialties which may be carried on in relative isolation. This characteristic libraries share with schools, hospitals, health departments, and other organizations whose staffs are part of the same profession but which have developed a high degree of specialization within the general field.

The position of the hierarchical head in relation to his subordinates is therefore more than usually difficult. His administrative style can scarcely be modelled on that of the old-line factory superintendent. The head of any enterprise must manage the incentives available so as to secure from the members contributions necessary to the success of the organization and its program.^{3, 12} In dealing with professionals the mere use of authority is inadequate. It is necessary to treat the staff as collaborators who have wills and purposes of their own.¹

In spite of this limitation it is the peculiar responsibility of hier-

archical chiefs to achieve some sort of common result out of the operations of the separate parts of the enterprise. Most of the subdivisions of work in any organization do not result in products which are useful in themselves. Those which are so, such as the provision of books and services to readers, are not independent enterprises, but require the concurrent operation of technical departments. The recombination of these elements into a stream of meaningful activity is partly provided in the prescribed routine of any organization, but it is not automatic or self-regulating.

The desired result will be obtained only when the people in each division are aware of each other's tasks and needs and how these relate to the goals of service set for the whole enterprise. Particular crises can be resolved by the direct intervention of the organization head, but day by day operation must depend on habits and attitudes built into the staff.

Doing those things necessary for reintegration, creating an awareness of general goals, defining these goals in terms of the operations needed to realize them, and creating an awareness of the relationship of the parts to the whole are the special responsibilities of the top administrator.^{12, 13} The conditions of cooperation in a complex enterprise can exist spontaneously in a poorly led organization, but it is not likely. One of the disadvantages of hierarchy is that so much depends on the people on the top: the whole scheme of organization makes coordination and control from any other point quite difficult. Hierarchy is the pattern of our time, however, and the responsibility of organizations to the public or to other sponsoring groups requires it. Staff self-sufficiency and accountability to outside control are incompatible conditions.

The recognition of hierarchical responsibility and of its usefulness in the management of cooperative enterprises does not imply that simple legal authority is a sufficient base for the management of internal relations. In current theory authority is not concentrated in a single person or office, and distributed by an act of will. It is a result of the specialization of functions, inheres in the whole organizational working, and may run horizontally, or even from lower to higher, as well as from top to bottom. In professional organizations particularly, staffs are apt to take independent views of policy goals and work standards. Insofar as they have charge of certain operations they are the authorities in their fields, and to ignore them would cause a serious disruption of working relationships.¹⁵

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The best efforts of a professional staff can be secured only if it is able to accept the policy and work standards of the organization as defensible under the standards of the profession. Collaboration in policy-making and in the definition of organization and method is indispensable in avoiding a gulf between the top administrator and his staff which neither can readily bridge.¹⁶

The administrator's role within the organization is particularly difficult because the staff is likely to be more intransigent on the question of defensible goals than he can afford to be, since he must regard the availability of resources and support and it need not. Perhaps for this reason a collaborative relationship will permit a fuller exchange of experience so that each may understand, if not fully accept, the standpoint from which the other makes his judgment.

The staff has been considered as if they were one in their relationship to the administrative chief. Of course this is not the case, wherein lies one of the principal problems of administration. Administration is essentially an interpersonal activity, not a manipulation of non-human objects. The persons on a staff are divided both by their own individual differences of character and by the values and goals which are most significant in the individual jobs they perform. This particularity of outlook is one of the strengths of all administrative organization. It limits the area of choice and the limits within which rationality must operate. It therefore increases the predictability and reliability of individual performance. It increases output since the individual's attention is constrained to cover a more limited field. On the other hand it may well lead to different evaluations of the situation which confronts an organization by members who come from different parts of it. Particularity of responsibility may therefore result in intransigence when there is conflict over procedure or policy, and in refusal to cooperate since differences loom larger than what is common.⁴

The minimizing of conflict and the promoting of cooperation are pre-eminently the responsibility of those in positions of general authority, that is, those high in the hierarchic structure. Conflict is partly mechanical—it follows from the subdivision of work and the definitions of responsibility. A given structure may reduce some types of conflict, but will inevitably increase others. It is obvious that the organization of work should suit the goals considered dominant for the enterprise, so that the largest number of people can identify with those ends even as they identify themselves with their own unit of organization. The tendency to identify with one's own unit, with one's own colleagues, to

accept the values and goals they accept, is one of the strongest forces at work in any organization. To utilize this force is one of the most important requirements of management. The division of work therefore, so that shared aims bulk as large as possible in the official structure of the organization, is a most important consideration in determining that structure. It tends to insure that a maximum area of decision will be influenced by goals which the hierarchic superior wishes to be dominant.^{4, 16}

The structural solutions will never eliminate conflict; they will merely provide new, perhaps more defensible or manageable, kinds of conflict. Securing the attachment of as many people as possible to the general goals of the organization is the surest way of attempting to combine the advantages of the specialization of labor and responsibility with a shared awareness that no one activity is an end in itself and that the performance of socially significant work can be achieved only by a combination of activities. In the process of getting goal acceptance the procedures of group discussion, conference, indoctrination, training, and consultation play their well publicized parts. The tone is set and the occasions for discussion and the sharing of experiences between the different parts of the organization are provided by the hierarchic chief.

The incentives and techniques open to the executive are extensively discussed in other places.^{3, 12, 16} The purpose of this paper is to reiterate a point often made, but perhaps insufficiently appreciated, that organizations consist of interacting people, set in an environment which must sustain their cooperative effort, and that legal authority and a legally autonomous position are an insufficient base for the management of any organization. In external relations an awareness of the interests which cluster around the institution and which must be accommodated in the development of service and program is a necessary element of success. In internal relations an awareness of staff goals and values, and the ability to relate the library program to these goals and values and so win support for the program, are equally necessary. This means staff participation in the development of both policy and method. It means the development of staff collaboration across the lines of organization and specialization. It means a due appreciation of the contributions which the staff make as collaborators in a common enterprise.

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