

The Human Side of Administration

Professional people, like all others, respond to expressions of confidence, to challenges of the job, and to dynamic leadership

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EXTENSION administration at any level involves the art and skill of working with people to accomplish the objectives of the Service. Administration can be studied and viewed from what may be considered the science of administration (the ability to structure, to rationalize, and to predict). But since human behavior is not always predictive or rational and often defies pre-determined structure, it is necessary to consider administration from the human point of view—attempting to comprehend its magnitude and complexities in light of the interaction of human beings (the staff members who give structure to such an organization).

Such an examination of administration is considered appropriate especially in light of present emphasis in Extension on assigning administrative responsibilities at the county level and reorientating such responsibilities at the district or regional level. Too often good county agents with brilliant careers of leadership have faltered under the morass of management operation chores or with the assignment that they organize and guide the efforts of others. Such tragedies often have been observed when the county agent's leadership abilities have been rewarded by promoting him to a supervisory or administrative position. Until recent years such promotions usually resulted in the agent being moved to some base of operation other than the county office. Now, in more and more states, the county agent is being asked to assume administrative duties, continue his present assignment, and remain in the same office with the same co-workers.

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With only limited reference to the structured aspects of administration, this paper will deal principally with the basis for interpersonal human relations among members of a staff. The discussion will deal with human qualities and administrative climate, incorporated into suggested guidelines. Because of the nature and complexities of the subject, it is not possible to cover all aspects in one such article. This should be considered more of an overview than a complete detailed treatment of the subject.

The person who is assigned administrative leadership is charged with the responsibility of creating a pleasant, productive, and stimulating climate in which his co-workers can produce effectively and advance personally and professionally. The person in such a position will be referred to as the administrator or executive (terms will be used interchangeably). In order for the administrator to function as expected, it is necessary to assume that he deals with a staff of mature, responsible people. Such people are described by Kavin¹ as possessing:

1. A feeling of security and adequacy.
2. An understanding of themselves and others.
3. A belief in democratic values and goals.
4. A problem-solving attitude.
5. Self-discipline, responsibility, and a belief in freedom.
6. A constructive attitude toward change.

There may be occasions when the administrator wonders if all of his colleagues possess all of these qualities. Introspection may even convince him that there are days when even he may demonstrate some degree of irritation and his behavior may raise questions. Insights into such dilemmas are not provided in our knowledge of organizational patterns, as important as such knowledge is. Some structure in any organization is needed for high efficiency, but in observing Extension organizations at all levels under many and varied circumstances, vastly different attitudes have been detected within organizations which, on paper, seemed almost identical. The difference stems from the administrative climate and the interpersonal relations within the organization.

Students of organization often despair in their attempt to explain how the Extension system operates so well, with its unique cooperative arrangement between federal, state, and county governments. They feel that we violate many of the principles of good organization (such as a well defined chain of command), but they admit that

¹ Ethel Kavin, *Parenthood in a Free Nation* (Chicago: Parent Education Project, 1960), pp. 74-92 and 108-29.

it works. It functions rather well but there is a paucity of sophisticated research to explain what, to some, seems to be a phenomenon. The answer likely lies in good human relations bred of a half century of cooperation by men of good will.

The inevitable conclusion is that people, not things, are important in creating a desirable climate in which to live and work. Every organization, because it is made up of human beings, has two structures: the physical which can be diagrammed and the human whose impact cannot be measured or described by lines on a chart. The creation of a desirable climate is paramount in building the kind of staff attitudes that lead to effective performance. Such attitudes stem from the action and interaction and interpersonal relations among all the staff. Success in administration depends less on what the executive does than on the climate he creates and on how much he gets done through others.

GUIDELINES

What are some guidelines in Extension administration that may serve as an aid in developing a good working climate? Most Extension staff members are recruited at time of graduation. In recent years several Services have placed the responsibility for recruiting and screening applicants in the hands of a personnel officer. He can develop skill in spotting young people of promise. The final selection and placement is usually and wisely left with supervisors. In such cases the county administrator is expected to work with people employed through a selection system other than his own. This does not make the job impossible but suggests some special considerations on the part of the entire staff.

Philosophy

The new man on the job must learn what the organization is trying to accomplish and something of its philosophy. An introduction to methods that are successful and those that have failed—with some basis for understanding why they succeeded or failed—gives him confidence. Encouragement to try the new but to discard the old with caution helps build confidence in himself and his superiors. Give him a job big enough to demand his best and help him when he needs help most. Give him the job, assure him of your help if needed, then get out of the way. Don't eliminate criticism, but eliminate fear of it. Urge him to make decisions without fear of making mistakes; mistakes may be as valuable as successes in developing ability to make sound decisions. Edison once said to a discouraged young man, "Yes, you have failed 2000 times but

what progress that is! Now we know that there are 2000 ways that won't work."²

Follett used a most significant illustration when she contrasted "power over" and "power with."³ Informal delegation suggests that the Extension executive, by discussion, can attain a high degree of agreement as to desirable goals and objectives. In contrast to command, coercion, or manipulation ("power over"), informal delegation suggests that the basic element is one of gaining understanding and agreement on objectives and goals.

The characteristics of a leader expected by those who work with him have been listed in many ways. Swearingen⁴ says that co-workers seek a leader:

1. Who is not afraid—of his boss, a tough job, his staff, of making an honest mistake, or of delegating authority.
2. Who believes his work is important.
3. Who believes those who work with him are important.
4. Who enjoys his work and helps his followers enjoy theirs.
5. Who enjoys seeing a man do a job that he thought he could not do.
6. Who will correct him—if necessary rebuke him *in private*.
7. Who controls his temper at all times.
8. Who will fight for his followers and defend them when he believes them to be right.
9. Who recognizes him as an individual.
10. Who is honest and of unquestionable integrity.
11. Who he can see personally when he needs to.
12. Who wants him to succeed and be proud when he does.
13. Who can show how to do a job without showing off or showing him up.
14. Who is wrapped up in his job—and finds in it a reason for living, not just earning a living.
15. Whose personal pride is not too sensitive.
16. Who guards against hurting others needlessly.

Long experience in working with people in Extension cannot help but create in the mind of the Extension executive a feeling that people can and do make sound decisions when given facts carefully and objectively interpreted. Failure to acquire this confidence and

² Frederick C. Crawford, "Creating the Proper Climate," *How to Increase Executive Effectiveness*, (ed.) Edward C. Bursk (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 14.

³ Henry C. Metcalf and L. Urwick (eds.), *Dynamic Administration: The Collected Papers of Mary Parker Follett* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, twelfth printing), pp. 101-7.

⁴ Eugene L. Swearingen, "Planning and Organizing Management Resources," *Training in Administrative Management*, report of an institute held at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma (Washington: United States Department of Agriculture, 1959), p. 15.

to demonstrate it by his behavior will only result in insecurity and apprehension. It can only lead to lack of delegation and to the frustration bred of uncertainty and suspicion. The executive who fears to surround himself with the most capable and best trained minds is sure to be bound by the chains of mediocrity. On the other hand, if the administrator firmly adheres to the objective of having his associates fully capable of taking over the executive job and doing it as well or better than he is doing it, then (and only then) can he relax and enjoy the satisfactions in administration.

Flexibility

Every organization has its traditions which once may have produced satisfactions and later become disturbing. The astute executive must carefully evaluate each tradition and decide if and when to break with it. Older employees may be more comfortable living with traditional ways of doing things while younger members may chafe at such expressions as "we have always done it that way." There may be very good reasons why the old way is best. But unless these reasons are made apparent to younger staff members through consultation and discussion they are likely to lead to frustration. Flexibility in administration and a recognition of its importance aids materially in getting acceptance of change. While many tend to resist change, others welcome it.

Flexibility can be contrasted to rigidity in the following manner:

FLEXIBLE ADMINISTRATION	versus	RIGID ADMINISTRATION
A. Decisions are made after careful evaluation of all available facts.		A. A rule book is written and the executive searches for the nearest applicable rule.
B. "Let's try it this way."		B. "We always do it this way."
C. Willingness to change policy when evidence supports need for change.		C. Expects absolute conformity to policy in spite of evident need for change.
D. Executive has complete confidence in people.		D. Executive trusts only his own judgment.
E. The informal as well as the formal organization is recognized.		E. The organization chart provides the answer—the grapevine is ignored.
F. Executive follows an open door policy and makes appropriate use of conferences.		F. Executive depends on memos, directives, and formal statements.
G. The boss is a good listener.		G. The boss never "listens out" a situation or a suggestion.
H. Executive is "people oriented."		H. Executive is "job oriented."

While a high degree of flexibility is desirable and contributes to good staff relations and morale, it must not reach a point where indecision, uncertainty, and frustration prevail.

Motivation

What is there in Extension which over the years has earned for its people recognition as selfless, tireless workers? The man or woman who watches the clock, drops the pencil as the whistle blows, or frets when a meeting lasts a half hour past the scheduled time is not typically Extension. Strother states that "motivation is based on needs, but indeed need and satisfaction are opposites. If a man is satisfied he no longer has a need, if he needs he is not satisfied."⁵ Apparently for the tireless Extension worker, once a need is satisfied in his professional pursuits, his goals become redefined and he continues striving to expand his sphere of service.

Herzberg⁶ and Likert⁷ treat the subject of job satisfaction and the factors that contribute to it in business and industry. Clegg explored⁸ factors associated with satisfactions of county Extension administrators. These studies indicate that satisfactions on and from the job are among the most important motivational factors in either business, industry, or a profession such as Extension. I would speculate that much of the satisfaction found in Extension work comes from doing work that is judged to be worthwhile. This suggests that the executive must exemplify the worthwhileness of the Extension undertaking.

By holding sound values high, the Extension executive provides a solid foundation for building a philosophy of his own. Such a philosophy in turn must be communicated to his associates. Breeding of better relations between the executive and his staff must be based, not alone on his own deep sense of values and philosophy, but on a recognition of some of the basic drives which play on acceptance of comparable values by his associates. The executive who loses respect for an associate finds greater difficulty in maintaining productive relations with him.

⁵ George B. Strother, "The Individual and Goal Achievement," *Directing the Cooperative Extension Service*, (eds.) Robert C. Clark and N. P. Ralston (Madison: National Agricultural Extension Center for Advanced Study, University of Wisconsin, 1962), p. 80.

⁶ Frederick Herzberg, Bernard Mausner, and Barbara B. Snyderman, *The Motivation to Work* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1959).

⁷ Rensis Likert, *New Patterns of Management* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1961).

⁸ Denzil O. Clegg, "The Motivation of County Administrators in the Cooperative Extension Service" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1963). For a summary and discussion of these findings see Clegg, "Work as a Motivator," *Journal of Cooperative Extension*, I (Fall, 1963), 141-48.

Nothing is more disturbing to the executive than friction, tension, or conflict. Unless astutely handled such disturbances contribute to strained interpersonal relations. Each in its own way creates its own brand of problems. Mary Parker Follett develops a most interesting analogy of the function of friction.⁹ She comments that "as conflict—difference—is here in the world, as we cannot avoid it, we should use it . . . we should set it to work for us." She points out that friction in the mechanical world has many uses:

1. Friction is used to transmit power by belts. Does this connote the transmission of ideas, orders, commands, edicts, or mandates? If orders grow out of a situation and the demands it creates, they are received and obeyed much more readily than if they are identified as personal demands.

2. Friction is used as a means of polishing. We sand wood, polish silver, and burnish brass by use of friction. Perhaps the whole gamut of factors associated with interpersonal relations are polished by some degree of friction (i.e., crudeness that may stem from inexperience, poorly conceived ideas, approaches to an assignment that inject an air of newness and freshness).

3. Friction is used to sharpen tools. Often in administration there is a need to get an issue sharpened. Many issues are not in clear focus and may be fogged by hidden factors. Sound decisions regarding an issue only result when the question is clarified and sharpened, to the extent possible, with all available facts. An issue may be further sharpened by consideration of what is believed to be facts and by careful evaluation of the opinions of people known to be knowledgeable.

4. Friction creates harmony. A violin in the hands of an accomplished violinist produced beautiful tones, while the efforts of the 11 year old (the inexperienced) with the same instrument can produce a very different effect. Many times disagreement, which may be producing friction, forces those who normally hold tenaciously to certain biases not only to seek relevant facts but to so order them that harmony will replace discord.

A public executive cannot disentangle himself from the "web of tension" created by staff frictions, differences of opinions, and outright conflict. He must learn to understand it, live with it, and try to make it productive. "Total conformity is a sedative to progress," Cleveland contends.¹⁰ Differences of opinions appropriately voiced

⁹ Metcalf and Urwick, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

¹⁰ Harlan Cleveland, "A Philosophy for the Public Executive," *The Influences of Social, Scientific, and Economic Trends on Government Administration*, (ed.) Edmund N. Fulker (Washington: The Graduate School, U. S. Department of Agriculture, 1960), pp. 9-12.

in a favorable climate help clarify issues and bring them into clearer focus. Complete agreement and cooperation may well signify too many "yes" men and not enough individualists able to identify and defend a point of view. In reaching a decision or in determining a procedure or course of action, the effective administrator welds together the varying points of view and interests into an approach acceptable to all.

SUMMARY

The acceptance of administrative responsibility calls for serious consideration of the interpersonal relationships which promote harmony and cooperation in advancing the objectives of the Service and in promoting the personal and professional growth of each member of its staff. As valuable as formal organization may be, it fails unless accompanied by good human relations. Professional people like all others respond to expressions of confidence, to the challenge of the job, and to dynamic leadership.

Job satisfaction results from achievement and recognition for a job well done. The Extension job, if well done, must be soundly undergirded by a deep sense of values held by the leader and communicated by action as well as words to his associates. The overriding rule to all human relations is the Golden Rule—a law that has never been repealed.

EVERY person is born with much capacity for intelligence. The big difference between individuals is that some people let themselves stop growing or are stopped too soon. No person need to go to seed early in this age when the mind of man is expanding into new ground more than ever before.

—from GEORGE SCARSETH, *Man and His Earth* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1962), p. 18 (contributed by Edwin H. Bates, Maine).

THE PEOPLE cannot look to legislation generally for success. Industry, thrift, character are not conferred by act or resolve. Government cannot relieve from toil. It can provide no substitute for the rewards of service.

—from CALVIN COOLIDGE as quoted in *Forbes*, XCI (February 15, 1963), 58.