

SECURING GROUP ACTION

16 November 1951

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Publication No. L52-53

INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE ARMED FORCES

Washington, D. C.

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GENERAL HOLMAN: Gentlemen, we have had some very interesting discussions this week, an insight into human relationships and the effect of executive leadership in directing, controlling, or failing to direct the actions of others. In all our discussions the problem or question of the behavior of the group comes up. The study of group action is very interesting. You have there the interplay of diverse personalities directed toward a common purpose, and you see some very interesting patterns in human behavior.

To increase our experience in this field and to put the spotlight on group action, we have asked Dr. Paul Pigors to address us today. As you know, Dr. Pigors is Professor of Industrial Relations, Department of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His long experience in the field of industrial labor relations, personnel administration, and human relations as a broad subject, has given him a keen insight into what goes on and what happens, when you deal with groups; the interplay of the personalities within the group; and the influence of the executive on that particular group.

Dr. Pigors, it is a great pleasure to welcome you to the Industrial College and to introduce you to this audience.

DR. FIGORS: Thank you, General Holman. Today I have been introduced better than such speakers usually are. I remember one time at a labor meeting the union president got up and introduced the speaker and he was a little bit embarrassed about it. He said, "Whenever you get people to come to listen to somebody, you have to have bait, just the way you would to catch a squirrel; you put bait out and squirrels come into the trap; the best bait for squirrels is a nut. The Professor here is the nut." I don't know just what he meant by that, but he got off to a poor start.

The other day I had a discussion with a business acquaintance of mine. We were talking about various international problems, particularly the coal problem in the Ruhr Valley. He made a typical remark that I think is representative of a general attitude. He was stressing the need for increased productivity, and he thought for a while, and then he said, "If we could only make people work harder." That was his attitude. It is in a sense authoritarian and is part of this pattern in which people in authority and control try to make other people do things. I had a hard time convincing him that we didn't believe in that and that our democratic approach to the situation is not how can we make people do things or make them work harder; but that our whole work is predicated on an entirely different approach.

I would like to give you this point of view in a sentence, because it is, you might say, the theme of what I have to say. We go at it this way: How can we help people to feel that it is worth their while to put in all they have. That's our approach. We don't want to make them do anything. Any parent knows from his limited home experience that you can't make people do things and really build up a good relationship. How can we help them to feel that it is worth their while to team up with us? That's the democratic approach.

I am going to use the word "teamwork." I know it will make many of you shudder, because that term has been so abused. But I believe it is a very useful term, because teamwork is a plus element, the plus element that we need for securing increased production. Now, if we could only realize that a plus factor is not something you can make people give, but it is a gift people must give of their own accord, then I think that would be the appropriate spirit.

Now, as I see it, there are two organizational objectives. It doesn't matter whether it is a business or private organization or Army--my experience in the Army is rather limited as to what the organizational objectives are. First, how to get this teamwork--and my whole talk will be around that particular objective. Second, how can we combine the principles of specialization and delegation of authority with a sense of responsibility for the whole.

Teamwork I define as the smoothly coordinated activity by the members in a small group that results from long practice of working together. Only you must remember that there are a great many factors that are essential for the development of teamwork--the most important factor is team spirit; that is, spirit that helps people to feel they want to put in all they have, and if you distinguish carefully between teamwork and team spirit, then you won't get into this absurd position that you will use teamwork in an unreal sense.

For example, it does not make sense to say that some big enterprise is a team. It is ridiculous to talk about people being on a team if they don't know each other. They will never know what each has to contribute to the common goal. But team spirit is something we can develop under these conditions. Team spirit has rational and emotional components. I merely list them here as part of the background.

I think when we develop team spirit, develop cooperative attitudes, we presuppose that people desire to pool their energies to reach a mutually desired goal. They have to know first of all what the aim is in which you want to enlist them. Then, the second point is that there must be willingness and, of course, ability on the part of every member to contribute something to this aim.

It is important to distinguish between willingness and ability, because many people are willing but they are not able, or conversely a person may be able (and a selective test would have shown that he would make a good team member) but, unfortunately, he is not willing to team up. So those two attributes have to be carefully matched, and also, people must realize that each member is more effective because of all the other members. In other words, this is not a star performance; it is group activity which he joins, because he realizes his own contribution will be more effective because of the contributions of the others. So, unless he can develop feelings that for the sake of the common aim he is willing to subordinate his purely personal purposes, you will find it is not going to work very well, because it is part of teamwork and team spirit that you must at times forego rivalry within the team. You realize that you can strengthen the team and make the achievement of the mutual objective more nearly certain by limiting your particular contribution at the time because somebody else is in a better position to carry the ball.

So much by way of definitions. The main point is that team spirit is the key attitude that we want to develop, but that is only one essential. When you really want to build teamwork, I think you have to realize three important facts:

1. It can only be done in a small group; the group must be small enough so that in a limited period of time all the members can know each other and, this is the emotional component, respect each other on the team.

2. Then there's a time factor involved; they must have worked together as a unit long enough so they can effectively supplement each other. When we theorize we act as if a team is continuously in being. But we should not forget that in practice, people get sick, go on vacations, are off the job at some time or another, so a teammate will have to substitute for somebody else, which in itself, you see, is a contradiction of our theory that you can specialize everything and achieve the total objective by successive delegations of authority.

3. Most important of all, there must be frequent, full, face-to-face communication. The people must be able to talk to each other, to plan, and to evaluate their activity. If that can't be done, we will never have a team. So teamwork as I see it can be established if the work groups are small enough so that you can establish satisfactory objectives for voluntary participation; if you have members able and willing to meet requirements, both technical and human, who are reasonably congenial; and most important, who have a supervisor who does all he can to promote team spirit, particularly by exemplifying the attitude in himself.

That is what we want, consultative supervision; because, the moment you set yourself up as the boss who knows all the answers, you kill that cooperative spirit in other people. Unfortunately, most, if not all, of us find it easier to call for voluntary cooperation rather than practice it or to work hard to create the conditions that favor it.

In industry, for instance, I find that for years we had this foolish concept of "one big happy family." In the early days, when I was a case writer and used to go into a plant and ask for information on social problems, the industrial executive would say, "You've come to the wrong place. We have no problems. We are just like that; (indicating by clasping his hands) 'one big happy family.' You had better go to some less well-organized concern." I used to write in my notebook whenever that remark was made, "Investigate this poor guy; he is in trouble"; because anybody who kids himself that his unit or organization is a happy family is just a fool; because even a small family is not always a happy unit. A lively family circle is full of opportunities for conflict and differences of opinion. All of us know that you have to be extremely wise as a parent if you want to develop yourself and the children in this process, and you are lucky if you come out still able to crawl at the end. I am now a grandfather, so I think I have made the grade. Unfortunately, I find I have to begin all over again. This child is often left with us, and I have to start in all over again. I have to work for some teamwork with this grandson of mine.

I believe we gradually succeeded in showing industrial executives that the "one big happy family" concept was unrealistic, and what did they do? They dropped it; but they immediately picked up another concept in its place. This is the "team concept." Now, everything is a "team"; the company is a team. All of management is a team. But you don't solve the foreman problem by merely saying he is a member of the management team.

They speak of the "management team." But this concept doesn't make sense when you analyze it as a working proposition. I interviewed a foreman. I said, "How about it? Are you on the management team?" He said, "I don't even know the score!" I talked with another foreman, and he said, "Well, brother, if I am on the team I must be the jackass who is pulling the whole load." When you have an attitude like that, you don't even have team spirit. He feels he is left out. Management is only kidding itself when it says he is on the team.

In fact, in connection with my book I had occasion to go to a large publishing house. I wanted to kill several birds with one stone.

I was on the eleventh floor and asked for the telephone extension number of a party on the tenth floor. The fellow I asked said, "I never heard of him." I asked, "Isn't he on the team?" He said, "Brother, we don't even know all the people on the eleventh floor." That's what happens wherever you go, Rockefeller Center, or any central office. You are lucky if the key people really know each other.

But so far as everybody knowing he is on the team is concerned, that is a particularly unrealistic notion. So I think the only thing we can say is, you can devote yourself to developing team spirit and building teams organization-wise at various levels. You can have a team of key executives; you can have a team of staff specialists. You can have teams at various levels, and you can hope eventually that the various teams will learn to coordinate themselves and work together. But they will never be a team.

I doubt that you could have a division as a team, or a field unit as a team. You can try to team up, but it is going to be quite a battle; naturally, all units have their own little ways of looking at things. If there's team spirit you can make a stab at it, but so far as calling it teamwork is concerned, where the ball will pass with rapidity from one to another, that is another story.

So much by way of introduction. So far as methods are concerned, I would like to recommend this: I am going to follow what Professor Maier has called, the "Risk" technique. A lot of the things I am going to say from now on may arouse in you attitudes of protest so far as the objectives are concerned, and I think you ought to jot them down on a piece of paper. For example, you may feel: "That sounds all right in theory, but if we do what you propose there's this risk, or that difficulty." Then later on in the discussion we might discuss these risks and see whether there is any substance to them; whether they are real or emotional, and see if some of these techniques that I propose have any applicability at all.

Now, I want to fit myself in with your program, so, in talking to the Colonel, I made some rapid changes, which shows that I am trying to be a good teammate, because I could have come in and said, "I was prepared to give this talk and whether they like it or not that's what they are going to get." That's an authoritarian approach. I like to be on the team, so I will ask myself on such short notice how can I best fit myself into your program.

I am going to give you a case example of what I call "group decision process." This is predicated on the simple theory of not trying

to make people do things, but to learn this new technique of helping people to want to do things and contribute all they have. It may be on the level of top management or among the rank and file. We want small, effective work groups throughout the organization.

The first point I want to make is this: In industry we find that workers do have ideas. Formal systems have been set up to attract these ideas. We call it the "suggestion system" approach. I could talk for the rest of the time on that theory alone. I will use it as an illustration and maybe come back to that later. Personally, I would say that often it is an expensive way of getting rather poor results. I know I stick my neck way out when I say this. It is like mining. Sure, there's ore there, but it is low-grade ore and you are paying a terrific price to get the ore, and the question is, is it really worth the expense, in view of the fact that there are other methods of getting better and quicker results.

I can show this graphically. I have taken the trouble to analyze the results obtained in a large corporation by such a suggestion system, you know, where you have a box and put ideas into it, and get paid for them. The incentive is: "Give us your idea and we will pay off." Notice the results. I have divided them for your convenience into two types; what I call "production" suggestions, and "auxiliary" suggestions. Production suggestions are the ones that we really want; they are suggestions that enable us to work better, more efficiently, more cheaply, and to get out a higher grade of quality, and that sort of thing. That's what we are looking for.

But what we usually get are so-called "auxiliary" suggestions, like, "Put a better light in, we need another fan, draw a line around the spittoon so we can see when we miss it." Those are suggestions that may please the janitor, but should we pay five bucks for it. Any respectable team member should have been willing to give that suggestion for nothing, in the interest of sanitation.

That's the type of suggestion you get. Look at what happens: The chart, page 7, shows the suggestions that have any merit, and also shows suggestions that were rejected as having no merit whatsoever. Nevertheless, each rejected suggestion involves an elaborate clerical process. Each suggestion has a filing card, its ticket, its report from the engineers that investigated it, maybe five or six forms that have to be filled out, and all to what end? To reject it, and that's all. Only a few of them were accepted. That's the "come on." They think if they pay them for these, they will get more ideas. But you can see that the general trend is down, down, down; very little result.

ANALYSIS OF FORMAL SUGGESTIONS

Year	Type	Received		Adopted		Rejected		Pending		High Award
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1942 (9 months)	Production suggestions...	1,844	59.6	97	5.3	1,503	81.6	244	13.1	\$750.00
	Auxiliary suggestions...	1,247	41.4	353	28.3	811	65.1	83	6.7	18.75
	Total	3,091	100.0	450	14.5	2,314	74.8	327	10.7	
1943	Production suggestions...	1,842	52.5	224	12.2	1,606	87.1	12	0.7	\$797.87
	Auxiliary suggestions...	1,660	47.5	583	35.2	1,047	63.0	30	1.8	23.74
	Total	3,502	100.0	807	23.1	2,653	75.7	42	1.2	
1944	Production suggestions...	1,310	39.4	154	11.7	1,156	88.3	0	0.0	\$949.37
	Auxiliary suggestions...	2,016	60.6	665	32.0	1,243	62.6	108	5.4	23.74
	Total	3,326	100.0	819	24.6	2,399	72.2	108	3.2	
1945	Production suggestions...	573	30.7	51	8.7	509	89.0	13	2.3	\$343.28
	Auxiliary suggestions...	1,300	69.3	489	37.7	525	40.3	286	22.0	25.00
	Total	1,873	100.0	540	28.8	1,034	55.2	299	16.0	
1946 (5 months)	Production suggestions...	255	37.6	11	4.3	206	80.7	38	15.0	\$596.59
	Auxiliary suggestions...	421	62.4	135	32.0	286	68.0	0	0.0	25.00
	Total	676	100.0	146	23.0	492	71.4	38	5.6	

I will just give you one other chart because this brings it home a little more graphically. The chart represents a 100 percent analysis of all the suggestions that were accepted or rejected. (Chart was not reproduced.) I am analyzing production suggestions only, because I am not much interested in the others. Notice what happens. Only those in red were accepted, and the ones in purple are what we call "pending." Those are the real troublemakers, because there's an idea there, but there has been set up a conflict between some engineer or some supervisor who says: "Why should management adopt that and pay someone for it. I have been thinking of this thing for years." And the engineer says, "I protest it." There's conflict between rival groups. You can imagine what happens. There's a suggestion pending there; the worker has made it sincerely in the belief that it is original; and somebody protests it. Is that building team spirit? He will be hating the company. He says, "I have a good idea and they won't pay for it." You are getting the opposite result.

Of course, many unions have taken the stand that they don't want production suggestions because they usually displace labor.

Well, while I have this chart I want to show you what I have done with it. I have prepared a comparison between these data and results obtained by the group discussion technique. An example of this technique is simply that you ask people to talk things over. In this company where that was practiced, from 90 to 95.5 percent of the suggestions were production suggestions--in other words, 90 to 95 percent were of the type that they wanted and needed. There were few of the auxiliary type of suggestions because the group itself didn't like them. "We are not going to give you five or ten bucks for that suggestion." That's what the group says. Workers take it from the group because it is not some boss telling them. That's one difference. Notice another remarkable gain. Of the suggestions that were made in the first year, 84 percent were actually accepted. In the second year, 89.2 percent were accepted. In other words, they had merit and were put to work, and only 16 percent dropping to 11 percent were rejected. That's the kind of cooperation we want; that's what I call paying off.

How can we get this result? I think we can get it by making this change in ourselves. You understand when I say "make ourselves" you know you can make yourself do anything you want. You have only to have other people to want to cooperate with you. So through this group-discussion technique or participation we want to help the fellow, to say: "You are not just an agent; you are not just a number of the payroll; you are not somebody that is going to be bossed around. We need you;

we want you; we respect you as a potential member of this group; so when anything comes up, we like to know what you have to say about it."

You understand, of course, if you have the authoritarian setup, it is awfully hard to make that change right off. For that reason, many companies take it in easy stages. An easier stage is to let people in on the discussion of a finished product. Top brass makes policy or plans and say it maybe needs to find out what the rank-and-file people think, and give it to them to ask questions about. Such information-sharing is better than nothing. Workers have a chance to say something, to voice their opinion. However, this is not too much, because once people express their opinion it doesn't fit very well to have executives say, "I am glad to know how you feel about it, but we are going to do it our way."

So if the executive wants to go on with this "consultative" technique, what he has to do is learn that this type of discussion must be timed so that it comes during the state of decision-making itself; so that the people feel they are contributing to this decision; what they have to say has a bearing on the outcome.

And all this means is that a superior accepts the fact that any wide-awake, live member in the rank and file in a decentralized, localized situation has something to contribute by virtue of his specialized local interest; that is, he knows more about what goes on in that particular outpost than the central authority does that gets everything over the wire, because after all, he is right there and saw it happen, and he has something to say.

Let me give you an illustration. I think I have theorized long enough. In the Navy an executive officer did a typical thing. He announced shore leave, put the blackboard on the gangplank saying, "Everybody back at midnight." That aroused a storm of objection, and all that. Nobody dared raise a voice. On an ordinary ship nobody would have said anything about it, but would have been unhappy about it, because the facts behind it were these: The town itself was quite a distance away from the port. There were only two busses running; if you had to be back by midnight, the last bus would bring you in fifteen minutes late. To be back on time, you would have to take the early bus, which narrowed the shore leave so that you wouldn't have any leave at all. The executive officer thought 12 o'clock was a nice time and put it down. The boatswain--there was just enough of a cooperative relation there--said, "Sir, couldn't you change it to 12:15 or 12:30?" The executive officer asked, "Why?" The boatswain explained the facts. The executive officer said, "Of course, I have no objection. I want to give these people proper shore leave. Thank you very much", and made the change. That was all there was about it.

That requires tremendous stability on the part of the executive officer. He has to be a big man. He can't feel that if a subordinate asks such a question he has lost stature. He has to have good team spirit. But, as I say, I would not press that point too hard. I don't know how far this has been developed in either the Army or the Navy. That is the thing I am talking about.

I will give a brief industrial example. We frequently have a situation where a customer has to be favored and the production department red-flags an order and runs it through regardless of the previous established schedule. That is hard on supervisors. They are on a close schedule and should protest that this upsets their whole plan. But in many companies they can't afford to do this.

So on an occasion like this the superintendent came in and said, "I want you to put this through right away." In an authoritarian setup a foreman would have said, "Yes, sir," and would have done it. But in this company they had already established this democratic discussion system and he said, "I beg your pardon; what do you mean by 'right away'?" "Right away" is quite a flexible term. "Have I got twenty minutes?" The superintendent said, "Why?" The supervisor replied, "Well, I have a machine here where the order is about finished, and in twenty minutes I am taking this down anyway, and I could put this job on this machine; but, if you mean immediate, as of now, I have to take this setup down, run the new order through, and put the whole setup back just for that. That increases my costs." The superintendent said, "Of course I didn't mean right away. Run it through some time today." That's the sort of thing I mean.

In other words, there are any number of situations where subordinates have local insight that may modify an order that the superior himself would want to modify if he knew the facts; but, unfortunately, the setup is so that often we don't dare do that, because the minute somebody asked for something and you ask a question about it, you get that stony stare like, "What are you trying to do? I am the guy that makes the decisions around here. See that you don't get off on the wrong foot."

The problem is, how can this be translated into Army terms? The rules have to be much more authoritarian and probably be very delicately handled; but I merely suggest that if you want to get that kind of cooperation, then you have to allow for this type of participation. I will rapidly give a few examples on how it works. I have brought along twenty, but I don't have time for them. Maybe we will have time for them in the discussion period.

First, we have participation of the group in technical decisions. In a chemical plant where girls were inflating meteorological balloons preparatory to running them through a vulcanizer, there was a tremendous turnover. The girls were dissatisfied with the mechanical conveyor and felt that they were slaves to the machine; that there was no fun in life. In order to solve this problem, Alex Bavelas, our psychologist, asked: "Is there anything we can do to let these girls participate in making minor decisions?" "How about letting them determine at what speed the conveyor should be run?" Immediately, of course--this is what I mean by the risk technique--their supervisor said: "Oh, brother; try that and the girls will lay down on the job and do nothing; you are licked before you start." That might have been true. You have no proof in a case like that.

Pretty often there have been people who immediately reject a suggestion like this through some fear, as the supervisor did in this case. In this plant the suggestion was carefully discussed. The engineer was asked, "Does it really have to be this way?" He said, "No, it doesn't have to be that way." That's the key question. Even when we give orders, we always assume that's the way it is. The engineer said, "It doesn't have to be that way, because all you have to remember is this: If you run the conveyor slower than a certain speed, the balloons will stay in this oven too long and burn; so you can't run it slower than this minimum speed. On the other hand, if you really rush them through and you go above a maximum speed, the balloons will go so fast through the oven that they won't bake properly. However, you can oscillate between this range and the bottom level. I don't care how you run it within these limits; just run it anyway you want to."

So the superintendent said, "Thank you very much." He said to the girls, "Why don't you elect one of your group as the officer of the day and let her decide at what speed the conveyor shall run." With this change in method, the girls sat there contentedly working day after day and week after week. Incidentally, their behavior was an indirect verification of results obtained by years of study at Harvard that showed that on the whole, people start to work slowly, with the attitude, "Do I have to do that work?" Then they get going; then they hit their peak for a couple of hours and they are going great guns, and then productivity tapers off. It is what we call the "eyebrow" effect. That's exactly what happened here. The girls started off at a nice pace. Then they said, "Let's go, girls." Then they really knocked it off. Then they said, "It's time to taper off. Let's go for coffee."

Production records were kept and, believe it or not, production increased 42 percent. These girls were on straight-time pay; they got

no extra money; but that's the way they liked to work. The supervisor's fear that they would do as little as possible proved groundless. That pace was kept up week after week, and different people rivalled for the privilege of being the person who made that decision. It would be fine if I could tell you that this is the happy ending to the story; but here's where I have to be honest. The unfortunate thing was, it worked so well it upset the relation with all the other departments. That went to show that management was not smart enough to extend it to all the other departments. So production had to be cut down because the rest of the plant could not keep up. I am not trying to sell you a bill of goods. We must learn how to handle these things. That's all I am suggesting.

Second, another example is one that has to do with policy. I was present at this meeting. A company had made up a manual--its employees were not in the final stage of policy formulation--they had made up a tentative policy manual, a procedure manual. I would like to give you part of the procedure they stated. It was that they would service without charge any customer-owned refrigerator of their make, as part of a contribution to get customer good will. That was the intent.

The executives asked the branch managers what they thought of it. They said, "Terrible! Lousy! We don't want it." The executives asked, "Why?" The managers said, "We don't think it pays off. Our experience is that too many customers have taken advantage of the company. They will take our service just enough to get free service and give the rest of the order to someone else. That makes us free dispensers of the service and we are caught in the squeeze, because we don't get what we are after in the sales from these people, so we feel we ought to have the authority to deny the service to a customer if he doesn't play ball with us." It was more or less that, and they discussed it. The management was convinced that the local managers had to be protected, so the change was made giving them authority to give this service depending on whether the customer was really a bona fide or honest customer, or merely using it as a game to get something for nothing. This satisfied everybody.

Third, another interesting example of work in an office may be taken from Professor Maier's article. (Maier, Morman R. F. "Improving Supervision through Training", edited by Arthur Kornhauser, Industrial Relations Research Association, Publication No. 3, 1949, pp.27-42.) ". . . two out of three girls were needed for Sunday work. All three had dates and none wished to work. Obviously, any solution that the supervisor would present would meet with objections. He put the problem to the girls. The discussion revealed that one girl had a date with girls and all agreed this was not a real date. She therefore agreed it was logical for her to work. Of the two remaining girls, one had a date with the man she was engaged to, while the other had a date with a new man. All of the girls agreed that

an engaged girl could alter her date, so it was agreed that the girl with a new conquest had priority. She was excused from Sunday work despite the fact that she had least seniority and had worked less often on Sundays."

There are any number of examples I can give of such participation in minor decision-making, but my time is running out. Maybe further examples can be brought out in the discussion. The only trouble is that the group discussion technique is easy to talk about but hard to do, for the simple reason that it reverses accepted relationships of a superior and subordinate. Another difficulty is that it is time-consuming. If you don't know how to handle it, it may seem to promote insecurity. Then the insecure supervisor puts too much emphasis on outer symbols of authority. It is taking a chance and coming up in the left field. A leader who understands the situation knows how far he can go. There comes a time when this technique won't work, when you have to say, "I'm sorry; we can keep this up all day, but after all the job has to be done. If you can't think of anything, then we have to do it this way." Somebody has to say it. That's an executive action.

In personnel work I often have an employee come to me who has a grievance. I don't know what to do. I say, "What do you expect me to do about it?" He says, "I thought you might have an idea." I say, "I haven't." I am not supposed to have all the ideas. I say, "I am sympathetic; I think you have a problem. Tell you what! You sleep on it and I will sleep on it. You come in tomorrow and if you have an idea, let me know. If it's something I can handle, I'll be glad to do it." The next morning he comes in and says, "I slept on it; I have no idea, let's leave it as it is." It may be that I haven't come up with an idea, either. But, now he takes it better, not because I have done anything for him, but because I have considered his problem sympathetically. We know life confronts us with all kinds of difficult situations. All we want to know and feel is that there is not just somebody who says, "I don't care what you think about it; I am going to lay down the law." That makes people angry, especially in America.

I would like to end this part of it by giving you an example involving myself. It puts me in a bad light, but I might as well tell the truth. I was brought up under the German system of complete subordination to authority. But since then I have learned that one of the greatest mistakes you can make is to kid yourself that you get obedience when you get external forms of obedience and control. On the S. S. Breslaw I was mess boy to the lowest of the low, the steerage stewards. Only the stokers were lower than my group. We didn't like the job. We looked forward to the half-hour of playtime in the afternoon. One day we were on deck roughhousing, playing, and the chief steward came and said, "Come on, boys.

I got a job for you." We couldn't say no; the minute he said "come on" we had to go. He presented us with a nice job. He said, "This is the cabin silver. It has to be polished, hop to it." We didn't say, "It is not our job and we don't have to do any work for the first-class"; that would have been insubordination. Although our reaction was to say, "Go to h---!" we polished the silver, but rather listlessly.

The chief steward came back in a few minutes saying, "Come on, boys; put some elbow grease on it." Then I rubbed hard. I found it was silver plated and I could rub it off. So I said to the boys, "We can have it our own way. Let's put on some elbow grease!" In 20 minutes we ruined the whole silver. The chief steward took us up before the Captain, charging sabotage, destruction of ship's property, etc. But what were they going to do? We were only 14-year-old boys. He told us to put elbow grease on and we put it on. We cried and protested: "We didn't know this would happen!" The Captain said, "No, boys, you are not to blame." So the chief steward got Hail Columbia and we loved it. He let us alone after that. He probably said to himself, "I won't fool with those boys. They seem to be a little hard to handle."

I could give you a great many examples. You will either get resistance or malicious compliance. The latter is the worst. Don't forget these "boys" know more than you do about these things. They will work out an angle that puts them in the clear and puts you where you don't want to be.

So the question as I see it is: Do the subordinates work with you in trying to improve the system, or do they work against you trying to beat the system? We want them to work with us. The only way to get them to work with us is by respecting them as persons, but letting them share in the decision-making when possible, and by training them as you go along to become constructive members of the organization.

I think maybe this is a good time to stop for the moment.

CAPTAIN CARLSON: Dr. Pigors is now ready for your questions, gentlemen.

QUESTION: I would like a little more enlightenment on this idea of having team members in comparatively small groups only. In other words I understand that in a factory we have the Control Department, the Production Department, the Planning Department, etc. Are you going to imply, or even let it be known that the people on the planning team are not necessarily team members with the production team? How are we going to get around that?

DR. PIGORS: That's a very good question; it hits this problem I was mentioning of how we are going to extend team play to each organizational unit. It has to be done through team spirit, as I said. These different teams, of course, will have to coordinate themselves, and the only way they can do it is by regarding themselves as members of the larger unit. Perhaps I should explain it this way. When we specialized organizationally, we thought at one time that you could, from the top executive down, cover everything by a successful delegation of authority, each man taking only a part of the total responsibility. Then we soon learned that this was foolishness. For example, you may reach a point where each unit does an excellent job, but at the expense of another unit; so you win on one hand and lose on the other.

So the first problem was: How can we get the idea across that while you have a specific specialized responsibility, you also have an unassigned responsibility for the whole; that is what I would call the team spirit. In a personnel administration, I may have to tell people this: You made a good showing, but at whose expense? Let's say an employment manager can make a good showing by cutting down interview time; but the Training Department of the Production Department must make up for that if he does a poor job.

We have to get people together for discussion in groups, and the people then discuss how the problems interlink, and you develop team spirit by getting them to agree that there is not only the narrow, specialized objective, but that each responsibility is, of course, a part of the total objective. That is a problem in education and communication, and is in itself a discussional project like this. Do I make myself clear? It is not so much the big team, because all these people begin to specialize; but in their decision-making all they do at times is to reject the alternative that may be the best for everyone. We say, "Hurrah for the third floor!" but it is not so good for the rest of the company. It is not teamwork. It is a problem in fact, on which I am now working. I am evaluating the concept of rigid cost control where we lay off so many indirect laborers to balance a layoff among productive labor. If direct labor is laid off, it is suggested that we can determine just how many indirect workers should go on a ratio basis. There's a case before the impartial umpire on that issue. The union protested that management acted arbitrarily when it took 30 maintenance painters and laid them off to fill the established quota. They were then asked, "Why are you doing it?" The answer was "cost control." But it was easy to show that it cost the company money to interrupt necessary maintenance work merely to meet this formula. It met the formula but not the organizational requirement.

I think it is too bad that the case had to be resolved through arbitration. It will establish unfortunate precedents. I think it

would have been better if management had admitted that there was a problem and got the relevant people together to discuss it. I think management could have probably seen in a case like this that it need not blindly follow the original cost-control formula. That is a problem in scientific management. I don't know whether it is that way in the Army but in industrial Pittsburgh, and in New York, the top executive merely sees a huge chart and the curves. If you are in the red he gets upset and has apoplexy. Everybody knows that systems are apt to be that way. Administrators may thwart an organizational objective by the subsidiary purposes of how results are going to look on a chart. That is what worries him, not the human complications. He wipes off the cost; he knows he will not be called to account for that right away--tomorrow he may be, but not now. So the administrator meets technical requirements but harms the team. That's a long way to answer the question; but it is a good key question. We have to learn how to fulfill our specifically assigned responsibilities without defaulting on our unassigned responsibility for the whole.

QUESTION: Is it possible for a single individual to be an effective member of two separate teams? By that I mean, let's say, can the bosses of the Planning, the Production, and the Control Departments, in addition to being effective in their departments also be members of the team of the executives? Can the bosses of the three departments still be effective on both levels and thereby propose by suggestion so that the problem is solved?

DR. PIGORS: That is what I call the linkage theory, where you link teams together by communication down the line, level by level. That is quite possible, where their work is practical; it will operate. The best example I can give you is in what we call plant development engineering. The plant engineer has to learn to become a team member of the work group, because he will never get anything done unless he works with them. In my communications pamphlet I cited a case where an engineer learned how to team up. But I am worried about that. Such coordination is a complex problem, because the only way he can team up with the work group is to disobey; for example: On one occasion, a manufacturing division, employing a dehydrating process, reported production difficulties. The supervisor put the blame for this on a temporary breakdown of equipment. Since deliveries were already behind schedule, Mr. Harris was immediately sent in to help. He found that the difficulty was owing to a mistake made by one of the key process operators. Through an error, liquid, instead of being withdrawn from the basic raw material which was being processed, had been pumped into it and had thoroughly saturated the entire batch. The operating crew had been frantically at work all night drying the material and hoped to salvage most of it. This procedure, however, interfered with normal operations and made it impossible to meet the production quota for that shift.

When Mr. Harris had sized up the situation, he was confronted with a difficult choice. Technically his duty was to expose the operator and to vindicate the equipment. But in the past this kind of solution of similar problems by other technicians had aroused much resentment. In fact, the technical engineers were regarded by supervisors and by workers as troublemakers rather than troubleshooters. As one foreman casually remarked: "Gremlins, we call 'em." Such feelings naturally led to antagonism between the two groups and the attempt to withhold information from these "demons." This in turn made the technical job more difficult and less useful. On the horns of this dilemma, therefore, Mr. Harris determined to take the long view. He acted on a communication policy that gave priority to the solution of a serious human problem rather than to a minor technical difficulty. But as this individual policy ran counter to an (unwritten) organizational policy, he had to misrepresent the facts in order to carry it out. He reported that the minor breakdown in equipment was not serious. It would be repaired during the morning, and by afternoon the department would again be running on schedule. This prognosis proved to be correct. And thereafter the workers and supervisors of this department had a better opinion of the Plant Operation Research Division in general and a special willingness to cooperate with Mr. Harris.

QUESTION: Doctor, I can see your consultative method of getting ideas across to a small plant very easily. But, if you have a plant of about 10,000 to 11,000 in a single place and there are five echelons between management and the worker, and the workers are in the order of possibly 800 different teams, the problem is to get a reading from the workers whether they want the lunch hour changed. Is it practical with so many teams, so many echelons, and people in various sectors, different places, with local conditions, to have to assume such a system as the consultative method?

DR. FIGORS: I think that is an excellent question. The answer would be, no. That is the point I want to make. In any large organization, contrary to suggestions made by the Mayo School, we don't want to pursue the clinical approach to the ultimate extreme. In a large organization you figure as a functional member, as a colonel, or an editor, or a maintenance engineer; and the first claim on you is as a functional entity, not as a person. I soft-pedal the clinical approach. The problem you mention I could water down a little bit. There are too many personal preferences. All you do is arrive at the ultimate conclusion that there are too many differences to reconcile them. All I say, Colonel, is that sometime it may be worth while to go through with it once to show them that in this area it doesn't work; but then establish the fact that obviously in a situation like that it is better to take a definite but reasonable position, since people must subordinate themselves, that's all.

QUESTION: Could the same purpose be accomplished throughout the smaller organization in a closed shop?

DR. FIGORS: That is the same problem. That's the problem where the international does not know how to control the locals. They are up against the same problems in the union and have not solved them. The trend is, in every case, as well as ours, to increase centralized power; slap them down; make them toe the line. Take away the charter? That is not the way we are going to solve conflicts. We have to counteract the tendency to centralize; make them do those things. It is going to be difficult, but it is worth it; and anybody who is trying it will never give it up, because the enthusiastic help you get, rather than animosity directed against you, makes it work. It is surprising how it cements different organizations.

QUESTION: Granted that top management is very much in favor of this system and wants to put it in, in a large plant, has ideas of trying to cut it down for the first- and second-level supervisors to get them to use it, but the top executives themselves can't use the system--how do you tie the two together?

DR. FIGORS: That is where the error comes in. First of all, there is the objection that your typical manager calls for cooperation and does not want to give it himself. Everybody is looking to see how they cooperate among themselves. When they see it isn't practical up there, they don't do anything. Let me give you an example. In one plant, we had a simple problem of everybody quitting early to go to lunch. It grew to be earlier and earlier and as many as 400 people were involved. The manager said to himself, "This has to stop."

The manager got all the foremen together and gave them a rabble-rousing talk about this problem. The meeting ended just in time for them to see the people going to the gate. So the foremen, in the presence of the other supervisors, said, "Let's see what the manager is going to do about it." He did what they expected, he crossed over to the other side and didn't see any one of the 400 people. The supervisors said: "That's good enough for us; he didn't say anything; we won't say anything." What could he have done? He couldn't have bawled out the men. That wasn't his function; but I think he could have emphasized in some way that we wanted something done. That's the only thing he could have done and then seen to it that they acted on it; but to ignore the problem, that wasn't a good approach at all.

I think the answer is responsibility for sound human relations must be shown on all levels. In policy writing, for instance, it is not a good idea to have a top man write policies for foremen. The president should write policies for the vice-presidents; that is his team. He stops right there. Then he should say, "You fellows carry it on to the next level," and so on to the level of first-line supervision. But if

you teach and preach one thing and practice another, you are never going to get anywhere.

QUESTION: There are many variables in this teamwork that you talk about. I would like to have you tell me something about the additional handicap or variable of union teams, with the teamwork within an organization competing--in other words, two coaches on the same bench.

DR. PIGORS: The way I go at it is, first of all, it is well known that the union is apt to have a better hold on the workers than many management representatives. I don't regard it as a misfortune that those fellows can team up and develop group loyalty better than management can develop. Our problem is, how can we hitch in with it and develop that same loyalty. It is not done through competition. You can't say, "I am going to set up a rival team." Sound cooperation depends on recognizing those team leaders yourself. Management often makes an error. They say, "Let's by-pass this fellow and compete." If you want to work with him in that team you have to work through him to that team, and build up situations where your interests in that area will become his. In other words, in giving information, I don't try to give it to the workers, as is so often done. If there's a union representative, give it to the union representative. I am not mentioning foremen. Naturally, I would have given it to them first. Most unions that are responsible will not deny the fact that even the most prosperous company must live. I think mutual interests can be established. It is a question of discussion. "What do you need? What do I need? let's get together and solve it." But you must recognize that the man who feels that your approach is a threat to him will buck it, and that needn't be, as I see it. Does that answer your question?

QUESTION: Dr. Pigors, in a large organization like the one the Colonel mentioned, or in even a much larger one, like the Army, Navy, and Air Force, for example, policies have to be established by means of breaking down to smaller bases. From our observation it leaves a residue of problems not solved by that method. Those problems usually require for solution the integration or work of several groups of specialists, sometimes from the top, sometimes horizontal. Can that thing be fitted in with your approach so a specific problem would be selected by someone to solve, and representatives of each group, vertical and horizontal, would be brought into small groups and made into a team? Would that work?

DR. PIGORS: Oh, yes. But I would not go so far as to say that is a permanent team. In a conference group, where all the relevant people are brought in, you can develop your ideas and solve problems. In the paper industry, for years they practiced having representatives

meeting in groups and discussing problems and solving them jointly this way, without giving up necessarily their ultimate right in cases of conflict. The union is not ambitious to usurp management. It has too many headaches of its own. We are always tempted to look for villains. Forget about the villain. It is seldom helpful to ask: "Who is to blame?" It is more constructive to ask: "What is to blame?" Let me illustrate with reference to a housing shortage. Imagine three people who only have the use of a gas stove with three burners. Under these conditions they wouldn't be able to solve the situation. They would all want to cook meals at the same time, and the fact is there are only three burners. There would have to be scheduling and things of that sort. That's where the situation itself would become a never-ending problem. To some extent a situation like that could be solved by good will, but don't try to solve it by saying, "He is the villain; he won't cooperate." But remember only temporary difficulties can be solved by good will. Once in a while it is O. K. to say--be a good Joe; don't be a prima donna. Do it just once; you take the rap. That's all right. That's team spirit. But if the organization only works because you constantly have one whipping boy, that has to be changed. That is what we have to change. There are any number of situations, as you suggest, which can only be solved by the problem-solving approach and by bringing in the relevant people who know how to contribute.

They must have some suggestion to make that will do two things: Create team spirit between them and put remedial ideas to work. Although I can see your fear that we'll soon have conference after conference, and committee after committee. Furthermore, there is some tendency for committees to perpetuate themselves. But we can get around that. Make an annual committee survey and ask at the beginning of the next year if the committee is still active. If it is not, abolish it. In one plant every year we have to abolish 40 to 60 committees that tend to keep going although their work is done.

QUESTION: Doctor, this growing group activity phenomena that seems to be coming to the fore--I would like your comment on the opinion of the group as to office Christmas parties and office picnics.

DR. FIGORS: In principle I object to official get-togethers like those where we throw our arms around each other, drink, and all those things. That is an artificial way of making up for all those failures that have gone on--that won't do. Personally, I am against all that, and the best way to test it is just organize a little discussion group and ask them if they want it. In most cases you will find that they don't; they themselves are against it. But they fear; once the system is set up that they must go, because the boss says so. In parties that depend on Dutch treat, those who can least afford the expense are the

ones who feel compelled to go. It is a must and miserable thing everybody hates, yet everybody goes.

QUESTION: I wonder, Doctor, if you will enlarge a little bit more and give an example of how you can make use of the suggestion idea instead of having a suggestion box or something like that, by bringing in the group. But when you have a large group of people, it is going to be hard to get to every group, or to drag it down the line.

DR. FIGORS: The principle is, get the group discussion idea accepted by the people who are in charge at various organizational levels. Problems are usually at specific levels, at specific friction points. The best place to have a discussion is where the friction is, where the people know what makes the sparks fly. Maybe you should be there if you want to train them, but the ball should be carried by the people involved in the problem.

On the other hand we must also face the obstacle of emotional involvement. Let me tell this story on myself. My wife periodically says, "I hear you are pretty good at personnel administration. Why don't you practice personnel work at home?" I say, "Well, darling, you see, it's this way; I am emotionally involved." That's the problem. You have to be sure you don't get too involved. If you are really involved, this thing is difficult.

Any emotionally involved person tends to be falsely oriented; because he is the center of it, he feels every suggestion is an attack. If it is a really hot problem where somebody is involved, it might be best not to have that person in, because the best suggestions come from people who know the facts but are not immediately involved. It takes some engineering, but I don't think it is too difficult, because you can start by talking about the problem in general.

Let me tell you how we worked it out at a large oil company. I had accepted a challenge to organize a ship's meeting and find out what the crew was beefing about. That is a difficult thing, because at one time Commies usurped the union and discredited the idea of such a meeting. Nevertheless, we wanted to try it. I took a trip to Texas. One of the management men was with me and kept needling me, day after day, about when I intended to have the meeting. I said, "Don't worry; we will have a meeting." We had passed through the Florida Straits, and no meeting. We were getting to the end of the journey. Then one evening I simply stationed myself near the lookout in the bow and watched the porpoises play. We were looking at them and I forced him psychologically to open the subject. I didn't say anything to him. I sat there watching, and he found it intolerable.

Finally, he said: "What are you after? What's all this about?" That's what I wanted him to say. So I told him. He said, "Well, that's

interesting. Why don't we have a meeting about this to iron out the problems?" I said, "I can't authorize a meeting. I am a visiting fireman here. It has to go through the Captain and all that. We'll have to go through the proper channels and see what we can do. Why don't you fellows ask for a meeting." The next day we had a meeting. We adopted the problem-solving approach and had an interesting time.

The prevailing discontent was brought about by a great variety of little different problems. Here is one of them. A tanker has a quick turn-round. Tankers don't stay in port long. This was one of a hundred problems we attacked and solved. People who lived in New York would be on watch in New York and would have shore leave in Texas. People who lived in Texas might be facing the reverse situation. Maybe there wasn't a 100 percent correlation, but that dilemma occurred too often.

So the first mate had been approached: "How about allowing us to switch, have Texas men stand the New York watch, so the New York men can go ashore in New York?" He refused this, saying that we were always yelling for an impossible rearrangement of schedules. He tried to defend his stand by saying, "I will be left on the hook because when I switch, the men will get drunk and I have no legal authority to penalize the substitute."

That's where we picked him up. We asked: "Is that so? When you have made a legitimate switch, isn't the man who accepted the substitute assignment legally responsible?" "On second thought," he said, "that's so." In ten minutes the group had gotten him into the position of admitting that the reason he didn't want to tolerate the switch was just personal on his part. He had alibies, but finally he said, "O. K., let's do it; but I know it won't work." The suggestion was adopted and, as a matter of fact, it did work.

All you have to do is try it and gradually show people that you don't shirk the necessary hard work. It was naturally a little bit unpleasant. You could have driven him into a corner. You have to guide him a little to get him to change. It requires a certain finesse to do it.

CAPTAIN CARLSON: I am afraid we won't have time for any more questions. Dr. Pigors, speaking for the students, for the Commandant, and for the staff, I am sure you have given us a lot to think about. Thank you, sir.

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