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COMMUNICATION IN HUMAN RELATIONS

Mr William Oncken, Jr.

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Reviewed by Colonel Tom W Sills, USA

Date 29 October 1959

INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE ARMED FORCES
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COMMUNICATION IN HUMAN RELATIONS

1 October 1959

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Reporter: Ralph W. Bennett

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INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE ARMED FORCES

Washington, D.C.

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COLONEL BUCKNER: General Mundy, Gentlemen: We have one final duty to perform in Executive Development and that's to lay to rest this subject of "Communication in Human Relations."

Maybe some of you remember that a previous not so distinguished speaker said at the beginning of this unit that communication, in his opinion, was the most important skill a manager had to have. I think this has been borne out in the course of our case studies and discussions.

Well, I can think of no better way to describe our speaker this morning than as the greatest communicator of them all; and with that I'd like to introduce Mr. William Oncken.

MR. ONCKEN: Good morning.

Communication will now be laid to rest. It'll take us about forty-five minutes to kill it, but for good. This being our commission and our object, we'll see to it that we live up to our assignment.

In the brochure which I read it indicates that we shall discuss communications down, up, and across; the importance; the blocks; and the compensations that we can make for the blocks that exist for this three-dimensional communications job.

Now, the very idea of communications up, down, and across implies some kind of a geography. It doesn't apply, for example, in an old ladies' sewing circle. There one doesn't know what is up or what is down or what is across. For that reason, communication develops very, very rapidly and without much inhibition. There really are no blocks. There are no devices needed to overcome these. And we would have no lecture if we were to discuss that situation. Even though it's quite possible to have as many people in an old ladies' sewing circle as it is possible to have in an organization in which there are communications blocks, the blocks inhere in the relationship, not in the number of people, or even of their predilections or their thoughts or their interests.

So this up and down and across implies an organization chart, which we know as the chain of command. There's very little that is known about the chain of command. I can tell you all I know in about 90 seconds and I'll proceed now to lay that one to rest.

To make one, in my observation and experience, all you need is a T-square, a pair of dividers, a large brown sheet of paper, something flat to lay it on, a sharp pencil; and you draw boxes. When you've done that, you connect them coat hanger fashion with horizontal and vertical lines. If you didn't do that, you wouldn't have any communications problem. But because you're doing this, you're building it in.

Now, when you've got these boxes and the interconnecting lines drawn, you should stand back and view your product in perspective, to make sure that you have wound up with more boxes at the bottom than you have at the top. If you come out any other way, it shows you're a rank amateur and you really don't understand management.

When you've finished this, you enter into these boxes position titles; and if you have an on-the-ball organization and methods group, they will force you to elaborate each position title with a functional statement. If you are in a civilian type military organization, then for the civilians at least, job descriptions will have to further elaborate on these boxes; but since they don't fit on the document, they will have to be filed. But you will never have to look at them again anyway; so this is no handicap.

Then when you've done this, you should paste in the pictures of the incumbents, especially those toward the top--the wheels.

And then you will suitably frame the entire instrument and hang it up in a prominent position on the wall in the headquarters office of your organization. And the purpose of doing that is to serve notice on all passersby as to who is entitled to needle whom about what. The higher you go in this chain, the sharper the needle becomes; and the lower you go, the closer you get to the 40-hour week.

This almost exhausts my knowledge of the subject except perhaps to add that this is one management instrument that requires practically

no maintenance. It is permanent and inviolate, for to change it requires decision at the highest levels; and since executive decision is in such short supply at those levels, this thing is not threatened at all by change of any kind.

As a matter of fact, to get a change usually one has to go on the outside and hire a management consulting firm to give you the moral support you need to make the change that you knew three years ago you should have made four years before that.

So much for the chain of command.

However, the chain of command in itself provokes two things. One is the need for communication, and also the obstacles to communication that make a lecture like this with some point.

Now, the solution to communication in organizations is not insistence in procedure. I think we all recognize that. It is not improved by different-colored memorandums, different-colored urgent or fragile stickers, whether you make it in triplicate or quadruplicate or only one copy, whether it is routed to desk A, B, and C first, or skips B and goes to C. These things really have got nothing to do with good communication. They can be hand maidens to good communication, but they can also just as well block good communication.

For example, it's quite easy, if you can use paper, to tell somebody else that you are taking his problem under advisement. This you can do and get away with it, as long as you put it on paper. But you

can't tell that to a man's face and get away with it. So it can also be used for those who don't want to communicate. So the system and procedures can be used by people in any way that they wish. And so a system is no better than the intentions of the user.

Well, now, I would like to take the thing one step further--that if we say that communication is the chain of understanding that integrates an organization from top to bottom and from bottom to top and from side to side, then we must recognize that to have a chain of understanding to make the chain of command operable--I'm talking about two chains now--one that you see a picture of and the other one that you can't--to have a chain of understanding that will make a chain of command operable, it's necessary that everybody in the chain of command be talking the same language.

This was recognized in early biblical times when the human race as a whole decided to build the Tower of Babel. It couldn't have been done without organization in the formal sense. Somebody was calling the shots. The shots were divided up and pieced out, and then the sub-shots were divided up and pieced out, and then the sub-sub-shots were divided up and pieced out; until finally the guy at the bottom got his piece and somebody else his piece and somebody else his piece of the shot. This was known as delegation.

Now, when the Almighty decided to obstruct this operation, had he been able to look down the centuries of time to try to get the best

management knowledge and information that has been developed new in the 20th century, he could have found in a management textbook all the things that are essential to organizational functioning; and he could have attacked one or two of them and destroyed it. For example, you have to have a personnel department--you just can't do anything without that--and he could have somehow or another smitten all the personnel men down and stopped the operation. But he was smart. He knew that wouldn't stop it.

Or he could have smitten down the budget office, or he could have smitten down the safety group, or he could have smitten down the forward planning organization. But he didn't do it. And I think the reason why was that his observation was just as astute as the Almighty's observations always are--"These people are as one, for they are all talking the same language."

So he attacked them at that point where you can attack an organization; and that is, introduce a multilingual situation, which he did. So consequently, you can imagine that the bricklayer hollers down to the hod carrier that he wants six half-size bricks colored blue, and what he gets is three full-sized bricks colored red. You can't operate that way. This is going to stop.

However, while all this confusion is going on, and the mission comes to a dead standstill, the personnel people are still looking at their turnover figures because they don't know that everything has

stopped out there. The budget people are still looking at the dollar sign. They don't know that the thing has stopped. And the forward planning people are still looking at their charts. And finally, in the end, the mission of the organization is not being accomplished, but the staff people are continuously behind in their work, putting in overtime.

Now, if there is to be a common language, which is the salvation of any organization, as against a multilingual situation, let's put our concentrated effort on where it's really important; and we must recognize that there are many different languages running around in any organization. Let us suppose that in some company it was decided that they branch out into a brandnew technological field. No one in the company had the experience or the background to head it up. So they hire Richardson, Bellows, Henry and Company, for whom I happen to work right now, and we have a search department, to look for the best-qualified men anywhere in the world to head this up. We take them literally; so we find the best-qualified man, an engineer, in Italy. So we hire him, and he becomes a department head. He must have an assistant, of course; so we look for him also, another engineer, but a little less mature, but a comer; and we find him in Sweden. And he takes up his position in a box underneath the Italian's box; and that's a line connecting these two boxes. Don't ever forget that. And that

line implies that the management wants a return out of their relationship, or there would be no line.

So the boss calls in his subordinate manager and says to him, in Italian: "Here's how we are going to operate around here" and he says it to him in Italian because he's got no choice. He doesn't know anything else. His subordinate, however, is listening to him in Swedish. He's got no choice, because he doesn't know anything else.

The net result of this relationship is what we in the Navy used to call *snafu*. The textbook writers call it administrative deadlock. My name for it is, Their wheels are spinning. Insofar as their mutual relationship is concerned, they are not getting anything done missionwise, even though they are in the same occupational field and even though they are oriented in the same direction missionwise. The language is different.

So, you see, we're not going to talk about communication from the standpoint of morale, sweetness and light, and having a happy ship. It has its place. We're going to talk about it from the standpoint of getting on with the mission. I've been in outfits where the morale was very high, where most of us worked very hard at keeping the morale up; and, as I recall it, most of us were pretty well agreed that maintaining the high morale was a wonderful alternative to working.

Now, you may say: "Well, Bill, we don't have this problem in the Army, Navy, and Air Force, because we all speak English." But I would like to suggest that there are many different languages running around in every organization even though they're running around in English. I'd like to isolate two of them, because they will be important in our discussion of vertical communication, both down and up; and then we will make an extension of this into a discussion of horizontal communication.

Every one of us has a job, of course. You gentlemen are unemployed. You are in a student capacity right now; but when you get back into this coathanger arrangement I was talking about, you will be in a job again. And every one of us instinctively and by nature wants something out of his job. At the same time, however, our bosses want something out of our jobs. So I want something out of my job, and my boss wants something out of my job, and what I want out of it and what he wants out of it are different things. They need not be in conflict, but they may be.

Let's discuss what my boss looks for in my job and we'll discuss what I look for in my job, because these things are looked for in different languages. If it still is a puzzle to you whether different languages do run around, did you ever have the experience where you served under someone who was in your same line of work professionally, but you finally said to your dear wife: "I'll sure be glad when I

get my orders to rotate out of here, because the boss and I, we just don't talk the same language." No complaint about his knowing his stuff. The complaint is, "We don't talk the same language."

Or have you had someone serving under you where you just hope to hell those orders will get here to move that boy out. Technically, he's good. Professionally, he's on the ball. But you and he have never been able to talk the same language. It means that in the line connecting you and him, there is no return on the relationship.

And now there are just two ways to solve that problem of no return on the relationship. One is to separate the two--put one of them in the north building in the basement and the other one in the south building on the top floor; so that you obliterate the line. Then one gets a return on the investment in these two men as individual contributors, the relationship no longer being there.

But if the relationship has to be there, and if you want a return on the relationship, then the only other answer is that one of these two men has got to learn the other fellow's language. And, rank having its prerogatives, you know who is going to learn who's language; where the effort will have to be made.

Well, now, as for the languages. Every place I have ever worked, except in my present job--our firm is a small outfit; they've got about 35 or 40 people. We don't do these things we advise other people to do. We are an exception--so I have no job description. But everywhere

else I've had one, written by my boss, that always started out this way: "The incumbent plans, organizes, directs, coordinates, and controls" whatever it was. It doesn't make any difference. This is the language of management--five words--planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling. And when I have read my job description, they have said nothing to me from the standpoint of meaning. They have said something to me only from the standpoint of the circumscription of my duties and how hard I can get hit if something goes wrong. But other than that, they have said nothing to me. But they're written that way because my boss looks at my job in that language.

He also talks to me in that language. When he raises the devil with me for malfunctioning, malfeasance, and other forms of mediocrity, it's always five questions he'll go through. "Bill, why didn't we plan better?" Or "Bill, let's get organized around here for a change." Or "Bill, a little improved direction and supervision would go a long way in your outfit." Or "Bill, let's get coordinated. We've got people over here sitting on their hands, people over here putting in overtime." Or "Bill, you don't seem to know what's going on in your own organization, and how about getting control?" Planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling is the manager's job, and I'm sick and tired of hearing about it.

There are occasions, however, when I will call my dear wife late Wednesday afternoon and say to her: "Honey, I'm going to work late

tonight." The last time I did that, she said to me: "Well, where's Bob Moore?" He's my boss. "I said, "He's on the West Coast." She said, "When will he be back?" I said, "In about 10 days." She said, "Will he ever know you spent Wednesday night working?" I said, "Not a chance." She said, "Come home, you fool. This is pretty poor timing."

Now, the language of management will not reveal to you why I spent Wednesday night there. It will not tell you why. It will tell you, however, what I am doing on Wednesday night. I'm either planning for the next couple or three weeks, or I'm trying to get organized for tomorrow morning's staff meeting, or I'm trying to get things together so I can give better direction to the effort over the next three or four weeks, or perhaps there's a matter of coordination between the various little departments in our own organization that I'm related with, or perhaps I want to get a little tighter control over what I'm doing; so when my next report goes in, it'll look good. Now, that's what I'm doing--managing. It doesn't tell you why.

In order to find out why I'm doing it, you've got to learn my Swedish which is the language in which I think about and read my own job description, and the language in which I tell you what I want out of it. And I've got five words for that too. And when I speak of myself, I only do so because I assume that you can be empathic with me, that we all want the same thing. But I want an opportunity to be doing

work that is significant and important by my own personal standards. And, as a river can rise no higher than its source, so no organization can accomplish anything of significance or importance unless the people in it have the opportunity to do significant and important things by their own standards.

For example, if in the Air Force none of the officers cared whether what they were doing was of any significance or importance by their own personal standards, the Air Force as a whole would never accomplish anything of significance or importance. And I have friends in the Navy who've been trying to convince me that this accurately describes the history of the Air Force for the past 15 years.

Now, that's what I want. That's what you want. And the things that you want is the biggest gold mine that your branch of the service has in you. There's no question about it. So let's not be modest about it. It's there. It's an asset.

Secondly, I want recognition. That doesn't mean I want my boss to pat me on the back every morning at 9 o'clock and tell me what a wonderful job I'm doing. I especially don't want him to do that if I happen to know that he just finished taking a human relations training course. I don't want him doing his homework in my office. But I do want my personal dignity as an individual human being fully recognized in all of my relationships with him and all of my associates in the firm for whom I work, because every one in this room is on two organization

charts. This is kind of an exception. You're in kind of a void right now. But if you're working for a living, you're on an organization chart headed by the man who is the chief functionary, whoever he may be. But you're also on another organization chart, and that is the organization chart set up by the Almighty. Except for the buck private, which is us, all the rest of the hierarchy is up in Heaven. So therefore, sir, if I happen to be working for you, I would like you to have the wisdom and judgment to know when you are dealing with me as a co-buck private on the Almighty's organization chart and when you are dealing with me as your immediate superior on your organization chart. Now, as long as you keep that straight, I'll work for you. I want you to make no compromises on either side.

The third thing that I want is, I want to belong to any outfit that I think is going places and taking its people along with it. And this is so elementary. It's the herd instinct--of wanting to be with something that's worth being with, often ill defined. And if I happen to be working for you, I want you to include me in. But if you include me in so much that I feel I have lost my distinctiveness, then I will up and do something that will amaze you, in order to set me apart as being some stupid bastard. I get notice. And if it turns out that I'm getting too much notice, then I hurry back into the fold again. And so I oscillate, I'm ambivalent, and you'll never be able to figure me out. And always you'll say to yourself: "I can't figure this guy out. We've brought him

in, we've made him a part of the team, and what's he doing? Sitting off there in left field and jumping up like a jack-in-the-box like he was an expert." Then, on the other hand, you let me stand out there like an expert, and you put me up on this platform, and I'm crawling right back down into the womb--the retreat to the familiar. You're going to have problems, but I want to belong.

And then I want security. I want economic security, which is the ability to plan ahead in my personal financial affairs. I'm now purchasing on time payments a television set, an automobile, a dining room set, and a house, and a lot of other things I don't even know about. But it's a wonderful feeling to lie back in bed with supreme confidence that all of these things inevitably and inexorably will be mine. There's nothing in this world I'm so sure of as that. It's not the size of the pay check that spells economic security. It is the inexorable regularity with which what pittance they do pay you comes in. So you can make the next payment. When you get a raise, then you start worrying. What are you going to do with the overage?

I also want emotional security. That's the ability to plan ahead with confidence in my relationships with my boss, my associates, and with the outfit for which I work. In other words, if I happen to be working for you, and on important policy matters you blow hot on Monday, cold on Tuesday, lukewarm on Wednesday, sideways on Thursday, and then on Friday you raise the dickens with me because I'm not following

the policy, obviously I am unable to plan ahead with confidence in my dealings with you. The company psychologist would say that you were filling me with emotional insecurity. This thing I don't understand, but from my standpoint I'll tell you what's happening. I can't ease you.

Now, if I can't ease you, I won't work for you. Don't get me wrong. I'll stay on your payroll. That's an entirely different proposition. But I won't work for you.

So we have these two languages; and I would like to discuss now the blocks that are caused by this dual language system in getting things done.

I think you have it pretty well in mind, but maybe I had better put on the blackboard, these things: (writing on blackboard "planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, controlling.") You, my boss, are looking for every one of these things in my job. They are never good enough and that is as it should be.

Now, downward communication supports the directing function. It supports it. It doesn't accomplish it. The needle does that. But it supports it.

Similarly, upward communication supports the controlling function, for one cannot maintain managerial control unless he has the information. But upward communication does not accomplish the control. It only supports it.

And horizontal communication supports the coordinating function. It does not accomplish it, but it supports it.

All three directions of communication support the planning function. And all three directions support the organizational function.

But, insofar as we're concerned right now, we're concerned with this, (control) because this has to do with the day-to-day, on-going; whereas this (planning) is the longer range and this (organizing) is the atmosphere, the setting. This is the on-going.

Now, observe. Downward communication and upward communication are initiated by different people. Downward communication is initiated by the higher levels of organization. Upward communication is initiated by the lower levels of organization.

Now, when you've got these two forms competing against each other for the amount of time and attention people can put on them, it's very easy to see that upward communication will suffer in the competition, because I, who initiate upward communication through the chain of command above me have not got the power rankwise to drive that up to where it should go, as the highest man has got the power rankwise to drive it down as far as it should go.

Now, this is no skin off my nose that I can't get it up there, because it's the top man's job in my organization to maintain control, just as much as it is his job to maintain direction of the effort. But because of the unequal contest, he gets short-changed on control,

unless he realizes why he's getting short-changed. It's not that I am a secretive, lying bastard. It's just that I haven't got as many kilowatts behind what I'm saying to him as he's got behind what he's saying to me. That's all. And he's never going to be able to give me those kilowatts without promoting me. My low power goes with the job and there isn't a thing you can do about it.

So we have isolated now the upward and downward communications and the fact that the downward has the advantage and the upward has the disadvantage, and the organization chart causes that block.

Now, as in many, many problems that can be solved, organization problems or management problems can be solved by just getting rid of the cause. But here's one where you can't do that, because if one gets rid of the cause by trying to put as much power at the bottom as you have at the top, then we've got no chain of command. You have no scalar appointment of authority. You can't get rid of the chain of command altogether to get rid of this problem or you'll have an old ladies' sewing circle, and that you don't want either.

So we've got to retain and maintain the very thing that causes this problem and learn to take action which compensates for the fact that organization brings about this problem but not reaching in any way that discipline in the organization that causes the problem.

Now, there are many movements afoot in management, and one of the movements is that the way you get rid of this problem is to

introduce a democratic type of leadership. Frankly, I don't know what this is. Where do you draw the line between democracy and mutiny, for example? This is a very fine line. I don't know what it is. It might almost appear that in some cases this tendency goes to the point of compromising the integrity of the organization and its discipline in the interest of being nice folks. Not always, but it seems so at times.

Well, now for downward communication. Why communicate anything downward at all? I'm not talking about directives. That's really not a communication at all. I get a directive from my boss. I haven't really been communicated anything except that he wants me to do something in a hurry. This is not really communications. It's a needle. It may take five pages, but it's still a needle. What I'm talking about in downward communication is to provide the meaning necessary to enable me to add value to what he wants me to do.

I recall on the New York Central, the president, in a staff meeting, when this recession was coming along--this was two or three years ago--said: "Gentlemen, we have got to cut 10 percent." He said: "But I say this: We're going to do it in such a way that we will not hurt this railroad. But we'll cut 10 percent. And we'll do it in 30 days. And if you don't do it, then I will."

What happened was that when the vice presidents left the room--and I'm not telling this as peculiar to any one company; you've been through this many times--each individual, now, begins to reflect at his desk what would he do?

Now, what the boss wants is "Let's get it done." But what is each vice president thinking about?

Well, the boss wants out of each vice president's job 10 percent of the jobs off of the payroll. So what does each vice president want out of his job? He wants to make sure that when he does it, he's done it in such a way that his opportunity to do significant and important things on that railroad will continue unimpaired; that he continues to be recognized with all of the dignity and the importance of his own job. He wants to feel that when he's through, he belongs just as much on the team as he does now. And he wants to also be sure that he can figure on his boss after it's all over with us before--no uncertainty is introduced by a frown from the boss that he hasn't seen the boss give him for the last six months. What's going on in that mysterious mind of his? Am I being scheduled for replacement?

Well, now, how do you negotiate this? How do you give the boss what he wants and still retain what you want?

Well, the way to give the boss what he really wants, which means a 10 percent cut without hurting the organization, is to plan the cut carefully, organize for it, then direct it very carefully, coordinate it carefully, and keep it under tight control. That's what you would have to do. But this takes time--to give the boss what he really wants. But in 30 days you can visualize him asking you, "How are you doing?" and the only honest answer you can give him is, "Well, we've just finished studying the matter."

What now might happen to your future opportunity, to your recognition as a good member of the management team, to your sense of belonging to the outfit, your emotional security, and maybe your economic security? The risk is great. So what do you do?

You pass the needle right down the line to slash left and right, a 10 percent cut right across the board, so that those fellows who have been economical and efficient and have already cut down to the bone are now crippled; and the other fellows, who have maintained the fat just in the event of this, are now rewarded for inefficiency; and when the president asks you one week later "How are you doing?" you say, "We've got the whole god damned thing done."

But it wasn't what he wanted. He wanted planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling. So he's got short-changed. Who won? The vice presidents. They won, and the operation suffers.

So we have to, everyone of us in middle management have to, weigh: It is better for me to make like he's getting what he wants and he is not and I'm getting what I want? Or shall I really give him what he's looking for, and I won't be here tomorrow? We're looking and talking and thinking in two different languages. That's one example of downward communication.

Now, let's take an entirely different kind of example, look at it in an entirely different kind of way. Organizations are sometimes tagged--not too often--but being an outfit, people will say you have

a reputation--"You never saw such mutual confidence and respect among the people." What you really mean, these people just communicate by nature.

Have you ever walked on your own base, if you're a base commander, or had another sizeable command, and talked with the people at the bottom of the totem pole--buttonholed them at random--this is your project for the morning--and asked them, "Do you know who your department head is?" If you're smart you'll pick a department where the department head is just one week old in his job. "Do you know who he is?" If the fellow says: "No, I don't know," that's one thing. But if he says he does know, you ask him, "Well, how do you know?" And if he says, "Because I've seen his name on a memorandum," you should raise holy hell. What a way to find out who your department head is.

I'm sure you may have done that. On the other hand, if you find out that the fellows all know who the boss is after he's been there no more than a week because they have met him, then you know that the top man is communicating his personality down among the people; and the communication of the personality precedes, opens up the way, and bulldozes all the brush that's got to be cleared out to get the real kind of communication down when you need it.

I recall I was in the Pentagon--and I'd better recall it. I was there for five years. Who could forget it? I was there up until three years ago, and General Taylor came on board. And he did something that no

Chief of Staff had ever done before. Some of the old timers almost had nervous breakdowns because of the change. He wanted to meet everyone in the Chief of Staff area of the rank of, I guess it was lieutenant or captain on up and GS 11 and 12 on up.

Well, this was a sizeable operation. It went up to 1500 or 2000 people or maybe more than that. He wanted to shake hands with every one. The immediate staff said this was impossible. He said, "All right. I want to do it anyway."

I won't tell you how it happened, but I was one of those 2000 or 2500. When I went home that night, I said to my wife: "Shake the hand of the man who shook the hand of General Taylor." She said, "What's so wonderful about that?" I said: "Well, what's so wonderful about that is that he asked for it. That's what's so wonderful about it."

It wasn't by accident. This wasn't on my initiative. I didn't just happen to be somewhere where he had to shake my hand. He went to a tremendous effort to do it. And I'll tell you this: If he had asked me to spend 36, 24, 48 hours, I don't care how many hours, in the Pentagon on constant, around-the-clock duty, I'm sure that I would have done it because he had used a bulldozer to open up a pathway for the kind of communication that he knew some day he was going to need; and, by George, when the time came, he wanted to know it was there. But it's a little bit late to go down on the shop floor and tell the

mechanics that you're going to rearrange the shop tomorrow for reasons of economy. If it was that damned important, why didn't you make it known a month ago? And if you didn't know it a month ago, maybe you ought to think it over. And then when they give you the dull stare, the only conclusion is that the trouble with the laboring man is, he's no god damn good.

That's downward communication. We do it to prepare for change. We do it to head off the rumor mill. People have confidence in sources of information which are the most competitive.

Now, you may say to me: "Well, now, Bill, you can't tell people everything." This is true. You can't. But one can tell people a whole lot more than one thinks that one could normally tell people. But let's just talk about what you can tell them.

Emotional security, when I want emotional security and when you want it, you want to be secure against the unexplained and the unrevealed. The unexplained and the unrevealed pose a threat.

Now, we have all been at the middle and lower reaches of the chain of command. And if you think back in your own experience how many things you have done which turned out to be foolish, ridiculous, and unwarranted merely because you had to protect yourselves either against the unrevealed or the unexplained. But either one of them could have been explained or revealed if anybody at the top had taken the trouble to use that as an occasion to clear out the brush and open

up a chain of understanding so when you really came down to say something, somebody would be listening to you.

Now, on downward communication, you go to the boss' staff meeting and the boss says: "Don't breathe a word of this to anybody, but I just thought I'd let you know, so you can figure." That's what he says to you. But when you hold a staff meeting with your people, they can't know it, because they shouldn't have to figure. So you say nothing. But the rumor mill had a fly on the wall and the thing is racing all around the organization. What are you going to do now? Deny it?

Or you can say: "Some very important decisions were taken at the boss' desk. They are going to affect every one of us. I am fully aware personally what is involved. I cannot tell you now what it is; but as fast as I can, I will." And then develop a reputation for doing it as fast as you can, and nobody complains. Well, a little.

But if people feel that there's information which for some unexplained reason, is unrevealed, then they want to know. I've come home at night and said nothing to my wife. I'm ordinarily a very voluble person. She looks at me and says: "Bill, you're not talking." I say, "That's right." "You've got something on your mind." The fact of the matter is, I couldn't have drawn more of a blank. Actually there wasn't anything on my mind. I say, "No. I haven't a thing on my mind." She says: "Bill, you have. Something happened today." She's insecure because of the unrevealed. And she keeps poking at me and so on. It

goes on hour after hour. About 11 o'clock at night she's in her bed and I'm in mine. "Bill, what is it?" And finally I have to invent a problem.

People want to know anything that they think is being withheld for unexplained reasons. On the other hand, if you just tell the guys: "Look, I'm holding back. I've got to hold back. But as soon as I don't have to hold back, I won't hold back," then nobody is going to be really hitting you with a harpoon to find out if you've got a reputation for living up to it. That's all.

Well, upward communication. I'll give you a little on that. I tell a little story.

I was walking down the hallway in the Bureau of Ordnance when I worked there. I've never been able to hold a job for more than three years. It was 9 o'clock on a Monday morning. I saw my boss coming up the hallway. Now, as we were approaching each other, this is what you call two echelons of command advancing on each other. This was Howard Langley. Some of you may know him--one of the best guys I ever worked for. He actually sat here a couple of years ago when I told this story on him. So it's perfectly all right. But he's got a different gleam in his eye for each one of the functions of management, and I could see the controlling gleam was really on as he saw me, because he was insecure owing to the unexplained, unrevealed portions of my activity for the past three weeks. He needed to get control; and in order to get control, he must get upward communication to support him.

So as we drew abreast, he said to me, "Bill, how's the work going?" Now it's my move. Well, I debated in my mind as to how to answer this question, because what he wanted out of my job was an answer, but what I want out of my job is to preserve all of the opportunities I now have, maintain all the status of recognition I now have, continue to be a real strong member of the team like I now am, and still continue to evoke my emotional and my economic security in my dealings with the Bureau of Ordnance that I now have. I'm not going to sacrifice those for any consideration whatsoever. So they're at stake. So I start debating in my mind. How do I answer this?

So the first thing that I said to myself--and it's going to take me a few minutes to tell you this debate, but actually it goes through your mind in a flash, instantaneously, like an IBM machine, 705--I say to myself: "How's the work coming? I wonder what lies behind that question?"

Now, I'm bothered with the inexplicable unrevealed. So I ask myself, "What lies behind that question?" Well, what does he already know that prompted the question? There are only two things he could know, and those are the status of Project A and the status of Project B.

So I reflected that Project A is in fine shape and six weeks ahead of schedule. Project B is in bad shape and behind schedule. "Now, I

wonder whether it was his knowledge of Project B that prompted the question?"

Well, now, if it was, that's one thing. But supposing he knew nothing about B. Then I'm quite safe in just talking about A. But if I talk about A assuming he knows nothing about B and then I say nothing of B, that could be bad.

I imagine that if I just told him that A is in fine shape--well, why don't I try it. So I tell him, "Project A is in fine shape and it's ahead of time." And I search his face to see if I can get some clue as to whether he knows anything else. But he's got a dead pan. He doesn't tell me anything.

So then I say to myself: "If I let it go here, what might happen? He might turn on his heels, go back to his desk, knowing full well about the loused-up Project B, which I failed to mention, look at his desk, shake his head, and say: "God, I've been looking 15 years for an honest man, and even Bill is no candidate."

Do I want him to do that? Supposing that as he shakes his head he looks at his desk and he sees a note written to him in red pencil. That's a prerogative of the Admiral. Nobody else can use that. And it says on it: "Dear Howard: I've got a special assignment for the right man. It would be a marvelous opportunity. Pick one of your boys and put him on detail immediately." Howard then says, I imagine: "Well, I would have picked Bill for this; but, based on the

impression I got in the hallway, I don't think Bill is ready." What happens to my opportunity? Right down the drain.

Recognition? No longer quite got the status. Belonging? I'm not sure I'm really on the team like I was. Emotional security? I'm not so sure I can plan ahead with confidence in my dealings with him. There is now the mystery, the unrevealed, the unexplained.

So, as Winston Churchill once said, that he was not going to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire, I wasn't in the hallway there facing my boss to preside over the liquidation of everything I looked for in my job no matter what he looks for. But I can't risk it. So I say to him, "Project B is not as we would like it and it's behind." He still doesn't say anything.

So then I say: "The reason why it's the way it is is that it got loused up in fiscal." So then he takes off like a bat out of hell with fiscal, because--something that I didn't know--this is the fifth time he's heard that excuse already this morning since 8:30. So he's seen. But I can't afford to let him get an unbiased account of what happened from the fiscal department's point of view. So I've got to block him. So I tell him: "Now look, don't disturb my good human relations with the fiscal department. We've had it out, and they had three girls working overtime getting out the what-you-may-call-it, and they've knocked themselves out." So he stops. But he's still there. I've still got to talk.

So I say: "Well, of course what really happened was that we made out that requisition on form 5907, put out by the General Accounting Office back in 1957, as rescinded in 1959, and replaced and restored the Bureau of the Navy Bureau of Supplies and Accounts, modified under heading 4, chapter 3, subparagraph 9, of the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts Manual, as referred to in footnote 6, which says that as hereinafter noted, in the event it's over \$5,000, the aforementioned shall apply; otherwise"--Well, I could lose anybody in three minutes with that kind of talk. But nothing stymies him. He's still with me.

Well, at about the end of 10 minutes I've finally lost him. So he looks at his watch and he says: "Oh, ho. Well, Bill, we've all got our problems, haven't we? I'm sure glad to see that you're on top of yours. And if there's anything I can do to help you out, don't hesitate to call on me."

All right. Now let's see who won. He was there to do what he was being paid to do, that is, to exercise control. He did not do this. He got no information at all. How did I come out? Well, when he said "Bill, we've all got our problems," he really assured me that I was a member in good standing of that great army of executives with problems. No reflections. What about when he said, "Is there anything I can do to help you out?" My door of opportunity was wide-open. When he said, "I'm sure glad to see that you're on top of yours,"

recognition. As a matter of fact, I got a medal pinned on me. I come out on top and he comes out at the bottom.

You may say to me: "Well, how does this square, Bill, with the fact that you say he's got more kilowatts?" Well, he's got more kilowatts when he's telling me, but because I'm lower-powered, I really don't have to tell him anything, because it doesn't take any power to knock somebody nuts. Wouldn't it be a grand thing if we could just dispense with the organization chart and have no communication problems whatsoever?

Now, you can carry this extension into horizontal communications. All it amounts to is a different departure. Recognize their opportunity, their force of recognition, their force of belonging, their force of economic and emotional security in different dialects. The Comptroller has got a dialect in which he estimates the opportunities for comptrollership in the Army. They are greater in the Navy than they are in the Army. The Navy hasn't gone as far in putting on the cloth and turning the collar around backward as has the Army comptrollership.

What recognition should be accorded the Comptroller's function and where does the Comptroller's function belong anyway? And for God's sake, can the Comptroller function plan ahead with confidence for the next five or seven years? Well, they can. They've got a public law behind them. It helps. And each department assesses what it's looking for in its own function for itself in a different dialect.

And these dialects get fouled up just as much as the two languages of management on the one hand and the language of motivation up and down.

So really we've got ourselves a matrix. You draw lines this way on the organization, and each echelon that's talking down is talking management and each echelon that's listening up is listening on the motivation side. And then horizontally you get the shift of dialects, each one having a different dialect for what he wants. And God help the top guy because he has got to be the interpreter and the translator. And if he gets too tired doing that, he can knock heads together and say: "Look, we're going to understand each other around here or there will be some new faces around here." And this sometimes works miracles.

If any of you gentlemen don't know Spanish and you made up your mind you're going to learn it just because you want to, it would take you two or three years. But if you were dropped in Spain with five bucks and told that you would have to make a living in Spain, you would learn enough Spanish in two days to make a living. But you wouldn't learn it in two years just because you feel that Spanish is a good idea.

And so we go to schools like this, the Harvard Business School, everywhere else, and what we come back with is, "It would be a good idea if I learned the dialects of other departments." But there's nothing like the boss saying "You learn it by a week from next Tuesday or you won't be here any more to really learn what's eating the Comptroller's department."

Thank you very much.

COLONEL BUCKNER: Gentlemen, Mr. Oncken is ready for your questions.

QUESTION: You said concerning controlling that one of the factors that come up in motivation is the economic factor. Would you like to discuss some of the fringe benefits and some of the other things that relate to it?

MR. ONCKEN: That means that we ought to really write down the Swedish side of this thing. Here's your planning over here (pointing on blackboard) and we'll discuss it. Here's opportunity, recognition, belonging, security. We discussed two kinds of security. One is emotional security and I have to put a corny symbol for it (drawing a heart). Then we've got the economic security, which is the dollar sign. And you recall that we defined security as the ability to plan ahead with confidence, on the one hand in your relationship with people, and on the other hand in your relationship with your creditors, who are not people.

Now, while my boss is studying my job to see what he's getting out of it over here, you see, constantly studying my job to see what he's getting out of it over here--and this is what you call performance evaluation--I'm also studying my job to see what I'm getting out of it over here.

Now, each one of us does this, and each one of us has a basic minimum that he requires. It's both a qualitative and a quantitative minimum.

Now, the minimum of significance and importance that you have opportunity to get out of your job might be A. We call it "A" because it can't be measured on a slide rule, but that doesn't mean that you can't estimate it just as well down here in your guts, where you feel these things. And the minimum you'll settle for on the recognition side we might call B. These are minimum requirements. The minimum that you'll settle for on the belonging side is C. Don't forget; you estimate these things many ways that are emotional. For example, on recognition there are some people who would rather have their name embossed in gold on the company letterhead and also on their door and wall-to-wall carpet and an intercom on the desk that leads nowhere than \$5,000 a year more without those things. Some people like that. So symbols come very heavily into our estimates of this (A) and this (B) and at times even this (C).

Under emotional security the minimum requirement may be this (writing "D") and the minimum requirement on economic security may be that (writing "E"). And again we say, it's not only a question of the size of the pay check. It's only really a question of being able to plan ahead with confidence when you're dealing with your creditors, based on the standard of living that you feel that you have to maintain.

Well, now, when we add all of these things up--and we can, because they are things of the same kind--we work for those things. They add up to F. And this is the income that I look for in my job. And F now becomes my minimum requirement, because it's the sum total of all the individual minimum requirements and this is my income. But, because it's not just money income, which is just one-fifth of the whole works, we've got to call it something else to identify it accurately. And so we call this "psychic income," from the Greek word "psyche" meaning "soul" or "spirit." It's the only Greek word I know. Psychic income.

Now, observe that if you are my boss--you as my boss can give or withhold on these--and it is the function of leadership judiciously to give and withhold. Here's how you influence people--by giving and drawing back on psychic income. Now, you can withhold some of these and bring them down to a point where they are below my minimum requirement for those. But by giving me compensation more than my minimum in the others, so that this sum never falls below my overall minimum, I'm with you.

There are people who say: "I wouldn't take that job if they paid me a \$100,000 a year." Whenever I've heard that, I've always asked the guy "Have you had that offer?" "Well, no." But they say that.

I could get an offer to go to work in Grand Central swabbing floors, and I would look into the job. Opportunity for me would be zero, because

I just don't see that as significant and important work by my standards. But they are by the guys' standards who work in there, and I respect it. In that respect we're equal in the Almighty's organization chart, and I respect them for it.

On recognition, people would ask me, "How come you're swabbing floors?" I would feel embarrassed, you see. All forms of labor have equal dignity but my sons never heard of it; and since they're the only ones from whom I get recognition, I wouldn't get any. So that's zero.

Belonging? I've got no hankering to join the floor swabbers' union. I've got no prejudices, but it does not appeal to me. It appeals to him and I respect him for it. That's zero.

Emotional security--I understand that when floor swabbers get promoted to foreman, they stride about drunk with power. I can't case a guy like that. My emotional security would be zero.

The question now is, How big should this be (E)--economic security? Well, zero plus zero plus zero plus zero plus E must equal my minimum requirement F, which I'm not willing to sacrifice under any circumstances. So if we solve the equation zero plus zero plus zero plus zero plus E equals the same F that I've got now, then E for me comes out to be a \$100,000 a year after taxes, and I'll take the job. No problem.

But then you say, "But what will you do with all this extra money? You don't need it now?" Well, I will use the extra money to purchase

off the job the opportunity, recognition, belonging, and emotional security that I don't get from the job, as follows:

I'll take \$25,000 worth of that and invest it in some damn good stock speculation. This will provide me opportunity to be doing significant and important things by my own personal standard at the A level. If I lose money the first year, I've got another \$25,000 next year. This is income, and this is more fun than you can imagine. So I've got this back up to A.

I'll take another \$25,000 and put a downpayment on a beautiful home in the most exclusive part of Westchester County. So when Colonel Sills and his wife walk by, he'll say to her, "Who just moved in there?" and in a bated breath she'll say, "Why, it's the Onckens. Didn't you know?" And my recognition comes back up to B, where I want it. I don't get these things from the job, so I've got to buy them.

On belonging, I will join a most exclusive country club, get active in civil affairs, until the mayor refers to me in a speech as "Bill Oncken, that pillar of the community." And, boy, when he talks like that, you belong. No doubt about it. They'd miss you.

Then I'll take another--I don't know what it'll cost me, but I'll have a cocktail party at my home every Friday night, to which I invite the Four Hundred in New York. They would normally wonder why a floor swabber is able to entertain on such a level, but around New York you never ask questions like that. You just keep coming.

Then I would invite my boss, and then he would have the problem, because he wants to remain on my invitation list, of so conducting himself that he can plan ahead with confidence in his relationship with me. And most bosses are smart enough to know that the way to do that is to so conduct himself so that I can plan ahead with confidence in my relationship with him. This he learns overnight, without having taken any human relations course. Necessity has become the mother of invention.

So now I've got this (A) back to where I want it, that (B) back to where I want it, that (C) back to where I want it, and emotional security (D) back to where I want it. And now how much money have I got left in the bank? Exactly the same amount as I now get in my monthly pay check from my company. No difference. And what do I do with this? Exactly the same things that I do with my present pay checks-- a little on groceries, a little on heat, a little on light, a little on savings, a little on this, that, and the other thing. So, as far as my budget is concerned, it has not altered.

So the question now is, Which would I rather do? I'd just as soon swab floors at a \$100,000 a year or be in my present job at a very small fraction of that, because either way I come out with F. Of course, I've had no offers.

Now, it's a function of leadership to pull back to get people's notice and attention with an opportunity to regain by demonstrating

competence, and by pulling at this thing, by giving and withholding it, on exercising what one calls organizational discipline, he provides leadership, guidance, teaching, and instruction just by playing these keys on the organ. It's another way of saying, you motivate them. Do not take these for granted. Work for them. Then hang on to them. Don't lose them.

Who started me off on this?

QUESTION: Mr. Oncken, what position in this communication chain would you say the fitness report or evaluation report should take?

MR. ONCKEN: The fitness report is a tool of management. Leadership has an opportunity to use that tool for leadership purposes on the one hand. It's also a statistical tool. As we all know, it's useful in sorting people, who really are not as sortable as the fitness report system would imply. I think we all recognize that.

This gets into the whole subject of pinning labels on people, what you do with the labels, and the impact that it has on the individual himself. We have two minutes to go. I could use these two minutes in just continuing the double talk I've already started. But in the Navy, when you rate a chief petty officer, you cannot rate him less than 4.0. So you have not communicated anything to him. He knew it before you ever put pencil to paper. So you rate him 4.0. The argument is that if he was anything less than 4.0, he would never have made chief petty

officer. If you rate him less than 4.0, you communicate something to the man that you don't want to communicate to him, because of what everybody else does. Honesty has got nothing to do with this, actually nothing. It's not a moral matter at all. We are wearing ourselves out on the subject. The effort to categorize people and force them into bins like commodities is a frightening activity. And this lends itself to that if one wants to do this. And it is done. I'm glad I don't get fitness reports.

Let me wind up with a little story. Did you see that cartoon in, I guess it was, "The Saturday Evening Post?" It showed a gentleman and his wife seated at the dinner table. They had about 50 feet between them--one of those long tables. He says to his wife: "We have just given aptitude tests to everyone in the company, and, boy, am I glad I'm president."

COLONEL BUCKNER: Bill, I want to say I think you've told us all about communications, and we appreciate it very much. We're looking forward to what you have to say about Captain Shattuck.