Chapter XII

The Executive's Contacts with Outsiders

EFFECTIVE HUMAN RELATIONS VITAL. So far we have discussed primarily the relationship of the executive (or the sub-executive) to his job within the organization, the facilities he should employ, and the systematic procedures which he should follow for getting his work done promptly and well in accordance with plans and schedules. A good executive, however, cannot limit himself to such mechanical and routine devices and arrangements. He must think in terms of the human aspects of his job and its relations to those persons outside the organization with whom he has contact on behalf of his agency.

TONE TO USE IN CORRESPONDENCE. The value of written agreements has already been discussed. The tone of all written communications, whether memoranda or correspondence, makes a great deal of difference in the attitude of the community toward the organization. The executive should be cordial and courteous in his written communications, considerate of the feelings of others, not brusque, and when possible informal. There is no good reason why he should not in his letters address executives of other social agencies by their first names if he knows them well enough. An exception might be observed when official communications from one organization to another or to an individual are involved and the communication is one obviously of official record. Then the official title and the formal "Mr.," "Miss," or "Mrs." should be used. The tone of the letter should be tempered to the wind of circumstance.

TELEPHONE CONTACTS. Equally important are the executive's telephone contacts. He creates a bad impression if he has his secretary take all calls and ask who is calling. The executive is a public servant. When he is in his office and not tied up in a meeting, he should be available for a telephone conference with anyone who wishes to talk to him. If necessary, he may quietly say that some other member of the staff can better give the inquirer the desired information,

and then have the call switched to the other line. At the telephone, as in other relationships, the executive should avoid the impression of being inaccessible and too important for the ordinary relationships of life.

Sometimes, however, he may find it wise to go to a quiet room where he can work beyond the tyranny of the telephone. If he is in a meeting it certainly should be unnecessary for him to have to answer the telephone and hold up the whole group while he is talking. Under these circumstances he can instruct the telephone operator or his secretary to take the person's name and telephone number and say that she will have him call. Return this call promptly. Nothing is more irritating than to have the secretary say, "Mr. X is in a meeting" or "is talking on another line" and then to have the call returned two hours later, or the next day, or perhaps never.

This procedure also may sometimes be advisable when the executive is in an important conference with an individual. Even then the telephonist had better say that the executive is in a meeting, even though it is only a meeting of two people. If he is in a real conference, the operator should indicate how long it will last and when the return call can be expected. Most people resent being told that they may not talk to Mr. X because he is "in conference." It sounds too exclusive! Perhaps a business man can "get away" with "in conference" and with restricting telephone calls to certain definite periods during the day. Nevertheless, the social worker who is dependent upon public good will for the success of his organization should guard against creating an impression of exclusiveness which may cause serious ill will.

It should almost go without saying that the executive, when available, should answer the telephone promptly and in a pleasant voice, and begin by saying, "This is John Executive" or "This is Miss Executive."

PERSONAL CALLERS. As in the case of certain telephone calls, the executive need not spend much time on some personal interviews. He may soon determine that someone else in the organization can talk with the caller more effectively than he can. In this event he should take the caller to the other person, introduce him, and see that he receives the proper attention.

The executive does not always have to take a caller into his private office; he can meet him in the reception room and then, if the caller requires further consideration, take him into the inner sanctum.

It is an act of courtesy for the executive, if someone is already in his office, to tell another person who is waiting for him how long he is likely to be occupied. He may suggest that the visitor come at another specified time if unable to wait.

(a) Accessibility. The executive should be accessible on demand to personal visitors. He may quite possibly think it good policy to see everyone who wishes to see him, whether that person is a client of the organization or the wealthiest and most influential citizen of the community. This catholicity would be based on the presumption that, if the caller considers his business important enough for the executive's attention, it is sufficiently important, at least from the point of view of public good will, that it receive that attention. Respect for the dignity of human beings will make the executive receive all with prompt consideration and courtesy.

Although it is desirable that definite appointments for calls be made, the executive should never refuse to see people with whom he has no appointment. Insistence on seeing only scheduled callers is one of the best-known ways of creating ill will for the organization and of destroying its usefulness. If the executive cannot see the caller, either he or his secretary should tell him specifically why and make an appointment for another time.

(b) Handling Requests of Callers. The executive naturally will be courteous and cordial to all callers and do his utmost to find out what they want and how he can grant their requests, if possible. He must be capable of quick decisions, based on thorough knowledge, when the subject is one susceptible of prompt action. When acquiescence is to be given, he should grant it enthusiastically and cheerfully rather than grudgingly. On the other hand, if the request is debatable or one that he cannot grant, the executive should state the reason clearly and ask if under the circumstances that would not be the caller's decision also. Or he may say that he will consider it over night and advise the caller the next day. (One of our seminar group declares the Texas way is to "say no and make 'em like it.")

Although rapid decision is desirable, wise decision is essential. The executive who tends to make snap judgments will find it well to temper his snappiness by giving twenty-four-hour consideration to those propositions about which he is not sure. But once he has given a decision against a proposal he should—unless new evidence is produced—be as inflexible in sticking to it as he would be enthusiastic in support of it if he had assented.

(*c*) *Terminating the Call.* Many times—all too often for an overworked executive—callers, unmindful of his problems, stay unreasonably long. The executive should get through with his own part of the interview as soon as possible. Then he must keep in mind the "other fellow's point of view" and be patient, if the caller's ideas seem of some significance. But, if the interview is really finished and nothing more, not even good will, can be gained by continued discussion, the executive can use various means of getting rid of the caller. For example, he may rise (whereupon the caller also will probably rise), move toward the door, express pleasure at the visit, and open the door. Thereupon the caller will find himself in outer darkness but with a feeling that the interview has been satisfactorily terminated. Another interview closer may be to ask, "Have I satisfied you?"

The seminar that has been discussing this book thinks that scheduled callers might be given more conversational rope than unscheduled ones. We think the measure should be not the amount of time the caller has reserved but the importance of himself and his ideas to the organization.

(*d*) *A Good Listener.* Many executives rich in experience or schooled in the techniques of case work, have made it a practice, in dealing with callers, to be good listeners. By listening much they learn a great deal. By saying little they commit themselves to little. Moreover, this practice tends to cut down the length of conferences. Further, the person who finds a good listener in the executive will feel that he is a fine fellow because of his sympathy with his caller's point of view. This sympathy, of course, should proceed from actual interest on the part of the executive.

Most people would rather tell their own troubles and experiences than listen to those of others. Then, too, the talking caller may talk himself into the solution of his problem, without evident direction by the listener. An executive who says little (provided he says something worth while when he does speak) but listens much, intelligently and sympathetically, will be gaining many points of advantage—and he may be more useful to the caller than if he engaged in unnecessary debate or domination.

(*e*) *Speak No Evil.* It would hardly seem necessary to caution executives to say only good things or nothing at all, were it not that so much ill-natured gossip is sometimes heard from them and from other social workers. It is wise never to say an unpleasant or discreditable thing of anyone except when it will help in the solution

of a problem. Nothing is gained ordinarily by tart remarks regarding another person. Often a great deal is lost, because the reputation of the one who makes the remarks is lowered in the opinion of him who hears them. Moreover, such statements often trickle around to their subject, and in that case both the executive and his organization will incur unnecessary ill will. One of the greatest compliments we ever heard paid to any executive was this: "I never heard him speak unkindly of anyone."

(f) Stick to Facts. A further sound practice is never to say anything not based on fact. If you do not know the answer to a question, admit it, say that you will find out, and then do so. Moreover, be objective—express your facts without distortion because of your feelings or prejudice.

(g) Do Not Promise Too Much. Do not make easy promises and take on many unrelated outside responsibilities which will conflict with official duties. It is better to refuse, because you must do your own work well, than to acquiesce in so many requests that nothing whatever is done satisfactorily. Then, when you have made a promise, fulfill it completely and on time.

(h) Boost Others, Not Yourself. Another sound conversational principle for the executive is to boost others rather than himself. Nothing is more tiresome than the executive who always says "I did this" and "I did that." Usually he did not do it; his staff or his volunteers did it. In social work, as elsewhere, the person who considers himself "the whole show" is a nuisance. The executive should be painstaking in giving credit to his staff and his volunteer workers so that they may feel responsible for results and happy to continue working for these results. The executive, as a matter of fact, can do very little without his staff and volunteers. He is wise to cultivate them and to give them more credit than is their due, even though by so doing he lessens his own rightful credit. Their credit is his because they are part of "his" organization. "We" sounds better and usually is more truthful than "I."

BUILDING UP A CONSTITUENCY. The executive will also find it wise as far as possible to keep in touch with his constituency, such as his board members, his committee members, and his leading volunteer workers, by personal calls or by pleasant notes whenever the opportunity offers. He should try, during the less hectic periods of the year (if any), to spend a definite time away from his office each day, calling upon the members of his official "family," getting their points of view and suggestions, answering their questions, and clear-

ing up their objections. From the information he secures he will derive benefit from acquaintance with human attitudes and from his constituency's feeling that it knows him and the organization.

One good way to make such contacts, under pressure of busy days, is to ask the "contactee" to have lunch with you. He will be pleased by your hospitality, and you will both be at ease away from the demands of callers. This is one of the reasons why, in our executive years, we have always belonged to a club. It is easier in that way to play host. You can charge the lunch to your account, without the possibility of haggling as to who shall pay. If there is no suitable club available to you, you can arrange for a charge account in a hotel dining room.

BEWARE OF TOO MUCH PERSONALITY. On the other hand, the executive must look out lest he trade too much upon his personality. In the smaller cities especially, social agencies tend to take on the name of the executive. The visiting nurse association may be known as "Miss Jones's organization," the family service society as "Mr. Brown's organization," and the children's hospital as "Dr. White's organization." The executive should take pains to present every official proposition and to make every official contact as the representative of his organization. Never should he ask anyone to do for him personally what the "requestee" would not do for the organization.

The executive should proceed on the basis of principle rather than on that of personality. He may make his organization seem the more attractive because he himself is charming and interesting. Yet he must guard against building up a personal constituency in place of one for the organization. He should so conduct himself that when he leaves the organization the loyalty of those who are on the staff and in the community will remain steadfast to the organization. Its principles will have been expressed through him. In behalf of it he will have labored with a single purpose.

The greatest compliment that can be paid to an executive when he leaves his job is that no one in the organization or community afterward has to ask him a single question. This can only occur when the staff has been so well organized and its volunteers have been so well informed that the work will proceed as steadily and smoothly as though he were on a vacation instead of in a new job. Then the new executive, by reason of the records which his predecessor has left and the attitudes he has created, can take up the work exactly where it has been laid down and can continue with steadily growing success.

COURTESY TO THOSE WHO SERVE THE AGENCY. The executive should be especially careful to follow at least the ordinary rules of courtesy in his relationship with out-of-town speakers and with others who have rendered services to the organization. Bills for traveling expenses and for honoraria (when promised) should be promptly paid —if not before the speaker leaves the city, at least as soon as his statement of expense is received. Even though no expense is involved, the executive should promptly follow up his own verbal expression of appreciation by a written note of thanks on behalf of the organization for the service the speaker has rendered—a service usually rendered at a considerable expenditure of time and effort.

If the speaker is the executive of another agency, it is a pleasant gesture to write the president a note of appreciation of the quality of service rendered. That enhances the speaker's prestige with his own board—the best possible reward. To make sure that the president passes along the good word, you might suggest that he read the letter at the next board meeting. You might also send the executive a carbon copy, so that he will know what you have done and can jog his president's memory.

WHEN AND HOW TO FIGHT. In spite of the cordial contacts which the executive ordinarily will develop, he will sometimes have to meet difficult situations. He may have to deal with individuals who are dishonest or who attack him or his organization and cannot be persuaded to change their courses.

Ordinarily "knock-down and drag-out" fights are unnecessary. If at the first symptom of trouble the executive will talk with the person who is in a belligerent state of mind, the difficulty can usually be smoothed out. Disagreement and misunderstanding generally arise through lack of sufficient facts. The executive should take for granted that the other person is sensible enough to listen to reason in view of the facts which he can produce. Stating the facts promptly to objectors will not only obviate the need for most arguments but will usually win friends and supporters for the organization.

Yet, if there must be an argument, the executive should go into it with full facts on his side and with all his might. The injunction of President Theodore Roosevelt "to walk lightly but carry a big stick" applies to the executive. Do not fight unless you have to and have reason to think you can win. Then, if you must, hit with all your might, strive for a knockout on the first blow, and keep after your opponent until you have won.

HANDLING COMPLAINTS. The same kind of alert activity should be practiced in the matter of complaints. Many complaints regarding the work of the organization are unjustified. On the other hand, social agencies, being but human, often do make mistakes.

(*a*) *Prompt and Personal Action.* The executive should acknowledge every complaint and criticism promptly, investigate the exact facts regarding it, and then give a full explanation to the complainant—usually either going himself or sending a competent staff member. Sometimes the objection can be handled satisfactorily by telephone or by mail. Often an important board member can be used to clear up the difficulty, especially if the complainant is influential or represents special personality problems.

The executive should respect a sincere complaint as he does any other responsible statement. He should be quickly accessible to callers who bring criticism. If a worker is the cause of the complaint, it may be desirable to have him talk with the complainant. If the organization is really in error, this should be admitted, measures should be taken to prevent its happening again, and the one who made the complaint should be informed of these measures. If serious damage has been done, it should of course be rectified as far as possible.

The complainant who feels that prompt and sufficient action has been taken usually forgets his irritation and becomes a real "booster" for the organization. A complaint in reality affords an opportunity for interpretation.

(*b*) *"The Customer Is Always Right."* Even if the complainant is wrong, the organization should yet have the attitude of the great mercantile houses that "the customer is always right."

Generally the criticism is unjustified. For example, recently a gentleman in our town who claimed he was a competent engineer stirred up a great fuss when he saw some galvanized iron boxes and ventilating fans unpacked in front of the refurbished Salvation Army Citadel. He declared he was not going to give to the Community Chest if the Army spent money on air-conditioning its quarters. He knew air-conditioning apparatus when he saw it. He objected violently, but he subsided when the Salvation Army major wheeled into action. The latter merely explained in Christian tones and terms that the new apparatus was a pair of circulating gas heaters for the auditorium.

The explanation of the actual facts should be handled courte-

ously so that the complainant does not feel that he is being criticized. The one who is handling the complaint should take it for granted that the complainant is sincere and justified in view of the supposed facts which have brought about his objection. Additional facts and interpretation should be supplied, and the complainant should then be asked for his opinion in view of the added information.

It is wise to notify at least the president of the organization of any complaints and how they are handled. It may be well, further, to advise the board. Its members thus will be able to deal with similar objections if they arise, or with the same complaint if the individual has talked to many people about it.

(*c*) *Public Answer to Criticism.* Anonymous complaints should not ordinarily be answered. Still, the executive should decide whether they call attention to a condition which needs adjustment. Sometimes complaint may serve as a basis for a newspaper story. Although specifically the story will not answer the criticism, it will give facts that will explain the difficulty in the mind of any unknown objector. Indeed, all complaints may be used as bases for newspaper publicity and radio talks. Positive statements thus disseminated will help to clear the minds of the public. If one person has an objection and voices it, it is possible that hundreds of persons may have the same objection and not voice it. Complaints therefore may be used as valuable indications of public opinion and, properly handled, may serve both to rectify the organization's practice and to direct its policy of interpretative publicity.

(*d*) *Apologies.* An executive should not try to turn away merited criticism. When an apology is to be made by the executive, it should be whole-hearted and "clean-breasted." The complainant, knowing that there can be nothing worse, is satisfied. If the executive only apologizes or explains in a halfway manner, the objector may feel that much more could be said. The following rule holds good: Be sincere, dignified, frank, honest, courteous. Stand up for what you believe, yet give the other fellow credit for his opinion. Secure a basis for mutual understanding through full presentation of all the facts.

BUILDING GOOD WILL. The executive, however, should not wait for complaints before he concerns himself with the public relationships of his organization and the creation of good will. He should be an ambassador to the public, obtaining the support of the community for his organization and for social work in general.

(*a*) *Personification of the Agency.* In every possible way he must, by his official and personal activity, build up a cordial attitude on the part of the community toward himself and toward his organization. Whether on or off duty, he is to a large extent the personification of his organization in the minds of many people.

(*b*) *Know the Community!* The executive's responsibility for creating public opinion means first of all that he must know his community—its likes and dislikes, the objections to his organization, and the criticisms, as well as those respects in which it is held in good repute. He must know all kinds of people and their attitudes—board members, volunteers, social workers, contributors, executives of other social agencies, city and county officials, ministers, newspapermen, leaders in civic and community endeavors in various parts of his community, labor leaders and industrial leaders, and key people in political, racial, and nationality groups. His acquaintanceship should represent, so far as this is practicable, a cross section of the community life.

(*c*) *Remembering Names.* McCandless says:[1]

> So important is acquaintanceship that it should not be left to casual development but should be part of a definitely planned program on the part of the executive and each staff member to expand his acquaintance to the limit. Have a definite plan of learning and retaining names. Be sure to get accurately the name of the man you meet. Learn some facts about him—where he works, what phase of activity he is in, what church he belongs to, etc. Look closely at him and try to associate name, face, and facts, and any unusual physical characteristic. At the first opportunity write down his name and a key fact or two. Do so with other men as you meet them from day to day. Review the list regularly, trying to visualize the name and face. Study the membership and other lists from time to time to recall as many as possible of the men who appear there. When you talk to such men afterwards call them by name and make it evident that you know them. Talk to them about the things they are interested in and learn to be a good listener as well as an interesting talker.

Another useful precept in the recollection of names is: Keep in mind the fact that we remember the things in which we are interested. If you are really interested in the people you meet and are concerned about complying with their wishes as far as possible, you will probably have little difficulty in remembering them.

A further memory aid is to visualize the spelling of the person's name. If the name is not spoken clearly in introduction, ask that it

[1] McCandless, James W., *Association Administration*, Association Press, New York, 1925.

be repeated. If you still are not sure of it, ask how it is spelled and spell it over to yourself, "see" it as well as say it.

Before meeting a new group of people, such as a new committee, read over carefully a list of those who are likely to be present until you have the names well in mind. Then it will be much easier to associate a person's appearance with his name as already visualized.

Again, during a meeting with people you have not known before, you may ask someone who does know those present to list them in sequence around the table or row by row. Study the list backward and forward and at random until you can attach each name to each face without reference to the list. After the meeting go over the seating chart again and again, until you are sure of each name and its owner.

(*d*) *Attending Meetings.* The executive also has the task of meeting people who will be helpful to his organization and of representing it properly. One form of contact which may easily be overworked is his appearance in behalf of his organization at meetings of various sorts, both those within his agency's field and those of general interest.

Certainly there are important meetings at which the agency's responsibility must be represented by the executive. Also there are some public meetings in which it is well for him to be an interested participant. Regrettably some executives apparently suffer from "meetingitis." They seem to attend more meetings than they need to—meetings at which their organization might be represented just as well or better by someone else or not represented at all.

Executives often appear unwilling to give a staff member a chance to represent the organization, when the staff member could act in this capacity just as well as they can. More than that, the staff member could learn something of participative social work. In the case of community councils of social agencies, for example, the executive of a member organization often names himself on too many committees. The result is that he is overburdened by attending meetings and has little opportunity to attend to the internal work of his organization, or that if he fails to be present his organization is not represented at all. The organization's delegate may often be a subexecutive, a social work practitioner, a volunteer, or a board member. This representative can present the agency's viewpoint adequately and bring back to the board, the committee, or the executive what he has learned and helped to decide at the meeting he has attended.

Diversified representation is frequently advisable at public meet-

ings. The executive often overrates the importance of his appearance at a civic celebration. No one, as a rule, will miss him if he is not there. Assuredly if he is present he can probably make some worth-while contacts, but one has to do something more in life than "make contacts"! A reasonable procedure in such a case would indicate that if the executive as a private citizen would have attended this celebration, he should go. If this is not the case, he should consider carefully whether his attendance is worth the required time and effort in view of his other duties and responsibilities.

A great deal of money can be spent by the organization, or by the executive personally, in paying for luncheon and dinner meeting tickets. Much of this money never comes back to the executive or to the organization in the way of tangible results. Some executives have found themselves so oppressed by demands to attend luncheon and dinner meetings that they make it a rule rarely to go to them unless they are actually to participate in the program or in the discussion, or unless by their own manifest presence they can render courtesy and express the agency's good will better than can anyone else available.

Other executives, revolted mentally and digestively by the succession of formal luncheon meetings which sometimes seem to be necessary, do not attend the luncheon but drop in afterward for a part of the program. Yet meeting with luncheon companions may be more valuable than the program which follows the consumption of the viands.

If an executive in a large city went to all the meetings that he might attend, he would find that he was doing practically nothing else. The tests which he should usually apply are whether by his attendance he can make a real contribution either to his organization or to the one that is holding the meeting, and whether equally valuable (if not better) service could be rendered by some member of his staff or by a layman who might go in his place. One advantage of sending a staff officer or a board member is that his sense of responsibility for the work of the organization is thereby enhanced. If he is a person of importance he may give the agency additional prestige by serving as its deputy.

Even within these limitations, the executive will have ample opportunity to attend meetings of all sorts. At them he can sample the various phases of public opinion which influence the work of his agency, he can favorably influence that opinion by the evidence of his competence and good will, and he can serve his community by effective participation in discussion.

(*e*) *Public Speaking.* As ambassador from his agency to the community, the executive also has a responsibility for speaking before community groups about the work of his organization and on related subjects. Opportunities for speaking can be created by the public relations director, by the speakers' bureau of the community chest and council or of the agency itself, or through the executive's own growing reputation for competence as a public speaker. The earnest executive will train himself in public speaking in order to improve himself as much as possible. He will remember the two consoling adages that public speaking is merely "enlarged conversation" and that the man who knows his subject need not be afraid of any audience. As a much experienced administrator once said to us, "The executive carries the responsibility of being able to make a more comprehensive, interesting, and convincing interpretation of the work of his agency through public speaking than any one else in the community may reasonably be expected to make."

One of the most experienced community chest executives in the country once told us that he thought the chief reason for the success of his community chest was that he himself, an experienced speaker and a former member of the state legislature, had spoken in person before practically every group in the community. This was a tremendous task, but it bore results which justified it.

This optimistic statement should perhaps be restricted by the qualification that the executive should find out the kind of audience which he best understands and with which he is most effective. If there are some groups with which he is not effective or to which he can make no contribution, it will be better for a member of his staff or board or a competent volunteer to give the speech.

Some agency executives have thought it wise to develop good will toward themselves and their organizations by speaking, on occasion, on some other subject than their own organization or on something perhaps indirectly connected with it. For example, the executive of a children's agency, just back from a trip to Europe as a child welfare consultant, might talk on conditions there as he saw them, mentioning his local agency only incidentally. His talk might be so interesting that it would reflect great credit on himself and on his organization. The executive who is a facile speaker, however, should avoid wandering too far from his subject. He may find himself giving a great deal of time to speeches that make no contribution to the development of an understanding of his organization and its problems.

(*f*) *Radio Talks.* Another form of public speaking through which the executive can serve his agency and his community is the radio talk. A good speaker on social service subjects is welcomed by the radio stations. This may be partly because they have an obligation to provide community and civic service programs as a condition of retaining their federal licenses for operation. To prepare and present effective radio talks requires much study, practice, and effort, but it is worth while. We are still amazed at the number of people who evidently listen to our weekly talks. (Maybe you would be, too, if you heard them.)

(*g*) *Keeping the Publicity Channels Open.* As a creator and interpreter of public opinion, the executive is also responsible for making contacts with publicity channels. This is entirely apart from his responsibility for directing or executing a public relations program. He should know the editors of the daily papers in his community and have both their confidence and that of their editorial staffs. He should always be available to reporters who want information about his organization or about any welfare subjects.

Occasionally the executive should thank the editors for their cooperation and ask them for any suggestions about public opinion which he should have in mind so that this may be changed, if necessary. He should tell them that he is always available for any questions about his organization or his field of work (even though this may entail an occasional telephone call at midnight when the morning paper is about to be "put to bed"), and if he cannot answer them at once he should say that he will get the necessary information. He may give the editors any suggestions which occur to him for stories or editorials outside of his field, as a slight return for their service to his agency. The executive may also render various special services to the newspapers, such as offering to arrange for authorities to review books on social work and sociology. He will find that this mutual relation with the press will be tremendously helpful, both in the suggestions which he will receive for the more effective interpretation of his agency's work to the public and in the more liberal consideration that will be given to publicity material from his organization.

If such a basis of mutual service is maintained, most newspapers will gladly refer to the executive complaints about his organization before they are published. Complaints to the newspapers usually are inaccurate and can be kept from publication by a statement of the facts. If published, the complaint can be accompanied in the

same story by a statement from the executive or the president of the agency which will prevent the "kick" from doing any further harm than is inherent in the facts.

The discreet executive, however, while making these contacts of mutual benefit, will avoid seeking personal publicity through this unofficial relationship. The less said about his personal activities and those of his family in the society columns, for example, the better it is ordinarily for the organization.

In these various contacts it is usually wise for the executive never actually to submit material to the newspapers for publicity, except in one of the smaller communities. This work may better be handled by a full-time or part-time public relations director or by a public relations committee. The executive's relationship will be stronger if he asks advice from the newspapers rather than suggests the use of particular pieces of publicity material regarding his agency. He should appear not as a suppliant for support but as an equal factor in the life of the community.

The executive's relations with the newspaper editors may be matched in principle by his contacts with those who manage other media of publicity, such as the officers of a Motion Picture Exhibitors League, the managers of radio stations, the leading ministers of the city, and so on through what might easily be a long list of persons who influence and control public opinion. He should, for example, be in touch with city and county officials, commercial, labor, and civic leaders, and other people of influence in the community, as a means of securing their ideas about public opinion with regard to his organization. These contacts will help to influence public opinion through the development of cordial relations and the giving of accurate information regarding the work of the agency. Some executives make lists of key people and call on them or invite them to lunch as they have the opportunity.

(*h*) *Gathering "Goat Feathers."* The executive's diplomatic status, however, is sometimes strained by the demands made on his time in connection with participation in community movements outside the actual work of his organization and its direct co-operative relationships. It is wise for him to engage only in those outside activities (aside from the public movements in which he must represent his organization) in which he would normally take part as a private citizen. He thus might participate in the various professional bodies connected with social work, as well as in the activities of church, club, parent-teacher association, civic organization, and Boy Scout troop committees. On the other hand, he should avoid

gathering too many of what Ellis Parker Butler once called "goat feathers"—those jobs which the community will wish on a willing person—jobs which get him and his organization nothing and which keep him from performing the professional service which he should render.

The executive may well ask whether he should participate in public campaigns for philanthropic funds outside of those of the community chest of which his organization may be a member. If there still is competition for funds between social agencies in the community, there may be a serious question as to whether he should engage in a campaign which will compete with his own organization for public support. Under certain circumstances he may find it advisable to help in the membership campaign of the chamber of commerce, especially in the smaller communities. Yet he should weigh carefully the benefits to be derived by the community from such service and compare them with the benefits it would receive if he devoted this time to his own job. On the other hand, he should consider the services rendered to his own organization and consequently should be willing to render reciprocal service, especially in an advisory capacity, for the sake of good will toward his organization. He should also serve on committees of outside organizations which may be connected with his own work. For example, the director of a social settlement might serve on the boys' work committee of a "service club," so as to make sure that its community program fits in with community needs and in order to learn about those needs.

The executive who takes part in too many movements often finds that there is some question about when he does his own work. Critics may object that the public through its tax or contributed funds is paying him for his job and not for work on behalf of innumerable other organizations. Obviously the executive should mix discretion concerning agency responsibility with the valor of public service and community good will. He should follow a course of moderation which interprets his own responsibility as a citizen and as an agency executive in terms of broad community policy and of constructive relationship to the creation of public opinion.

(*i*) *Joining.* The problem of the executive's relationship to outside activities suggests the question, often asked, as to what organizations he should join (in a different sense than the "participation" which has just been described). The "joiner" is as abhorrent in social work as in other presumably cultured circles.

The executive will find it well to consider the problem first of all

as a citizen and as a member of a profession. From that point of view, he should join those organizations with which he would normally affiliate—such as church, social clubs, and lodges—and groups that correspond to his hobbies or special interests, such as camera clubs, drama guilds, and the like. As a matter of professional responsibility he should also belong to professional groups in his field, such as the American Association of Social Workers, the National Conference of Social Work, the American Association of Medical Social Workers, the state and local conferences of social work, and similar groups which advance his professional standing and add to his professional ability.

He should pay his own dues for all memberships which primarily advance him in his own profession through furnishing information, prestige, and contacts. The meticulous executive will be zealous to pay more than his share of his memberships, lest the suspicion arise that he is using his official connection and the membership payments of his organization to advance his personal interests.

On the other hand, he may belong to certain organizations in his community purely in his official capacity as the executive of his agency. Many social agencies follow the example of business corporations in paying the dues of their executives in chambers of commerce, advertising clubs, "knife and fork" clubs (such as the Rotary, Kiwanis, Optimists, and Exchange), where the purpose of membership is to make contacts with other elements of the community and to develop co-operative relationships for the agency.

The board of the organization should decide whether it thinks such a membership is worth paying for. If its decision is negative, the executive must then decide whether he himself wishes to pay for membership in the organization as one that offers personal affiliations which seem to him desirable. He should remember that many of these organizations will probably be represented on his own board of directors and that some of the co-operative relationships can thus be developed without his participation in every organized group in town. If he belongs to too many organizations he may run the danger of acquiring ill repute through the ineffectiveness of his participation in any one or more. Moreover, the keen edge of good will may be dulled by the repetitiousness of his contacts.

A sage executive once gave us the following advice: "You will be benefited and your work furthered if you have pretty wide outside contacts. You thus will meet folks in a different way than through your social service job." This advice, taken in moderation, seems to

be wise. There is great danger that the social worker will walk too much in the rarefied atmosphere of social work and will be too much the professional, not breathing in sufficiently the common aspirations of mankind. He must learn to get along with all kinds and conditions of people.

(*j*) *What May He Advocate?* Akin to the problem of membership in other organizations is that of the executive's responsibility and freedom in making public statements and in advocating principles which may not be those of his organization. He should not, as a general practice, publish an opinion or make public statements regarding subjects that are outside his field. He must also remember that a leader cannot go too far ahead of the public opinion of his group or he will lose his group. Some martyrs have attained converts by their agonies; many other would-be martyrs by their sacrifices have merely lost the opportunity for leadership. The far-sighted executive will find it well not to seem too radical in making statements which will affect public opinion. Rather, fixing his course toward an objective far ahead, he will work toward it bit by bit, sometimes retracing his course but never appearing to hurry unduly.

This counsel applies to the executive's unofficial statements as well. It is true (unfortunately perhaps) that in most communities he cannot separate himself from his official connection. If he speaks at all, he is known to those who hear him as the executive of his organization. What may be his private opinion is thus almost certain to be considered the policy of his agency. He should not use his official prestige to advance his personal ends and private beliefs. Thus in political affairs—the example of some distinguished social workers to the contrary notwithstanding—it is a matter of discretion and of ethics for him to avoid personal advocacies and to limit himself in his public statements to expressions of principle.

For example, an executive may find it unwise to come out publicly for one or another candidate for governor of his state. This personal adherence would alienate some people from the organization's program, which might depend for its success on the co-operation of all elements in the community. This individual action might also be disastrous to the agency's service program if the opponent were elected to office and sought retribution from the agency whose executive had opposed him.

On the other hand, since public officials under a merit system are usually enjoined by law from political activity, the executive of the private agency will find it good policy to work with all political par-

ties for the incorporation in their platforms of planks which advance some special interest of the agency—such, for example, as more adequate appropriations for public health and welfare, improved services to children, and so on.

Actually, in many cases executives have come out strongly for unpopular causes. This may be justified when the organization is the reflection of a great leader and when the board represents an individual who has done an extraordinary piece of creative work rather than the agency itself. Yet, when the executive in the more usual sense is the employee of a board of directors and with them a trustee for the effective expenditure of contributed funds, he will find it wise not to make public statements or to engage in public conduct which will endanger co-operation or alienate support, unless this procedure is in line with the agency's policy.

If the executive feels that he must speak in a way that might be dangerous to either of these factors in organization life, he should first secure the approval of his board of directors. If they refuse to consent to his proposed course of action and he decides that the issue is so important that he must express himself, the fair procedure then is for him to resign and throw himself wholeheartedly into this cause.

Certainly nothing can justify the practice of some executives who apparently use their agencies to support parties, candidacies, or movements, when the individual's support means nothing and that of the organization (implied in the individual's use of his title and his known connection) means everything.

(*k*) *Behavior.* Not public statements alone, but often—and unhappily—behavior as well affects the popular attitude toward the work of a social agency. The executive, unfortunate as it may seem to many libertarians, must know his community well and govern his conduct in accordance with the standards of community life. For example, notoriously immoderate consumption of alcoholic liquors by the executive would in most communities adversely affect opinion regarding him, his organization, and social work generally as well. In some very conservative communities dancing in public by the executive might be harmful to the program of the social agency. In others, appearance at certain types of theatrical entertainments might be regarded as unseemly from the point of view of the kind of work in which the agency is engaged. In still others, playing cards on Sunday, if seen, might alienate important elements in community support.

The community always has its critical eye on the executive as spender of its funds, whether contributed or paid in taxes. Moreover, he has to be a good example for the people whom his agency serves. This is especially true of a youth or child welfare agency. The executive is a sort of community employee, a pastor of health and welfare. He may feel like an embarrassed guppy in an aquarium of all-too-crystalline clarity. That is one of the penalties of community service. A state song goes, "The eyes of Texas are upon you." That is true in principle, wherever the executive may go.

Even in those communities where conviviality is generally accepted, the social executive will gain rather than lose by a general policy of abstemiousness. Living in what might generally be considered too elaborate a house or driving too expensive an automobile, even though the executive has his own income, might cause criticism which would affect contributions and support.

Numerous examples might readily be given of the ways in which an executive might unthinkingly cause serious damage to the work of his organization by conduct considered proper in some communities but not in others. If he feels that the burdens made necessary by community attitudes are intolerable, it is better for him to move to a community whose folkways are more in accordance with his own practices than to persist in manners and attitudes which will seriously handicap his organization. The ancient counsel, "When in Rome do as the Romans do," applies thoroughly to this situation.

When the executive takes a position in a community, he accepts, by implication at least, the conditions of community life there. He should conform to local customs in so far as they are not dishonest or disreputable. He should endeavor in his conduct to cause attention not by what the local citizens may consider his eccentricities but by the excellence of his work and his sympathy with and understanding of the spirit of the community. An integrated life for the individual includes the community as an extension of himself.

The thoughtful executive, having in mind the greatest success of his work, will doubtless discover that by observance of local customs and the development of a reputation for moderation in personal conduct he will gain freedom for the more effective development and service of his organization. This is perhaps his prime task as ambassador to the general public.

(l) Place of Residence. Some executives feel they must make one further concession to public opinion, although many others do not approve of this attitude. This is the belief that the executive should,

as part of his job of creating and knowing public opinion and sharing in the life of his community, live in that community and be a part of its life. For example, the head resident of a settlement cannot do his work thoroughly and well unless he lives in the settlement or adjacent to it and is part of the neighborhood (modern community center practice to the contrary notwithstanding). Similarly, it is advisable for the executive of a family society, a community chest, a visiting nurse organization, or a local public health association to live in the major community which his organization serves. He should suffer its disabilities, share its problems, and add his enthusiasm as a citizen to the satisfaction of the technical community engineer or social worker.

It is not sufficient for the executive to live in the suburbs, outside the city limits. He should live in that part of the community which is most important in the life of his organization. If he lives outside the city and has to go to the mayor with proposals for the improvement of municipal social work, the executive may perhaps be less enthusiastic and effective because he himself does not suffer from the evil conditions which exist. Moreover, he is less likely to be successful in gaining his objective because the mayor probably knows that he is not a voter and has no official voice in local affairs. In the same way, if the executive goes to the board of education in a city to discuss the improvement of public health work in the public schools, and if he is not a resident of the city and his own children are in private or suburban schools, his plea is less effective than if he were a citizen and taxpayer in the community he seeks to benefit.

In accepting a community job, the executive accepts also the responsibilities and the privileges of community life. He cannot work as enthusiastically or as well if he does not suffer from the evil conditions that may exist there, benefit from their improvement, and live as one with those citizens who are making common cause with his organization in service to the community. If an executive, on going to a new city and a new job, puts his children in the public schools of that city, buys a house there, and joins the organizations to which he as a citizen would normally belong, he gives the impression that he is sharing in the common lot of all its citizens. He appears not merely as an outside "promoter" but as a part of the community life. This appearance is of great advantage to his organization.

Such a relationship may be a source of satisfaction to him also, because what he does benefits not only his organization but also

himself and those whom he holds most dear. It is a great advantage (and a great satisfaction) to be able to address a meeting of the supporters of one's organization as "fellow citizens."

EFFICIENCY TECHNIQUE; A GUIDE, NOT A RULE. Now (and at not too great length it is to be hoped) we have arrived at the conclusion of the specific discussion of those factors which go to make up the technique of personal efficiency for the executive. Obviously no individual executive will find it possible to attempt to possess all the personal qualities, to secure all the training, or to follow all the principles of planning, study, record keeping, discipline, office arrangement, secretarial use, handling of complaints, reception of callers, and public ambassadorship which have been discussed.

It is not even suggested that complete adherence would be desirable. Each executive secures his own results in his own way. All that is to be hoped is that this statement will serve as a basis for partial agreement or disagreement and for raising questions as to the proper and satisfactory procedure for executives, and that it may help them to formulate their own complete and integrated philosophy of work and their own set of working habits. Thus equipped, they may be enabled to do their work a little better and to progress toward the attainment of their personal and official goals in whatever seems to them the best way.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the tone of the correspondence of some social agency you know?
2. What kind of telephone contacts does the executive of that agency make?
3. How does he handle personal callers?
4. Are you a good listener?
5. Do you speak no evil?
6. Do you stick to facts in your statements?
7. Do you promise too much?
8. Do you boost yourself?
9. What does an executive whom you know do about "building up a constituency"?
10. Does he trade upon his own personality or that of his organization?
11. What does he do about obligations to out-of-town speakers?
12. How do you do your fighting (if any)?

13. How does this executive handle complaints?

14. How does he build good will for his agency?

15. How do you remember names?

16. What does this executive do about attending meetings?

17. How well does he speak in public—and how frequently?

18. What is his relationship to the various channels of publicity?

19. Do you gather "goat feathers"?

20. What is the policy of this executive on "joining"?

21. What is his policy on public statements outside the field of his agency?

22. What attitudes are there in your community, compared with those in some other community, which might modify the behavior of a social agency executive?

23. Where do social work executives whom you know live in relation to their jobs?

24. How do you think the practices which you have described in answer to these questions might be improved?