

## *Chapter II*

### Shared Administration

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INTEGRATED LIFE ESSENTIAL FOR THE INDIVIDUAL AND FOR THE AGENCY. Your life is effective and adequate only if it is consistent within itself. To be happy and useful you must work out a harmony between your inherited tendencies, your experience, and your environment. Somehow you have to make the pieces of life fit together in a unified, creative whole. It is a tough job, particularly in the changing circumstances of this dynamic age. If you accomplish it, though, you will have what is called an integrated life.

Such a mode of life is necessary for a social agency as well. It, too, is a living organism. It lives, grows, and creates human values in the community. The agency's existence is made up of bits contributed by the people who run it. The agency's life is fully useful only if it hangs together within itself. It must express harmoniously the common aspirations and the mutual decisions of the people who are responsible for what it does and how it does it.

THE WHOLE GREATER THAN THE PARTS. There is another curious parallel between a human being, like ourselves, and an organization. Clergyman, philosopher, and psychiatrist agree that we humans are more than the sum total of our chemical and physical elements, in their unbelievable but undeniable formation into a more or less active entity. These elements working together and fused into a whole (by what some people call a soul, or by God) create all the activities and values of human life.

So it is with such an organization, as a well-administered social agency. A lot of human beings may be brought to share in its activities. Let us use the example of a mental hygiene clinic. Its participants range all the way from the volunteer president to the "naughty" little girl patient, who at this moment may be in the clinic's observation room slapping a doll which she pretends is her little brother, while the psychiatrist on the job tries to figure out why she hates the other kid so. Each person who is responsible for the work

of the clinic, or who is served by it, helps to make it what it is or may be, if the clinic is managed participatively. The sum of values can be greater than the parts.

You may wonder why this is true of organized human endeavor. Here is the answer: Let us return to human beings. We ourselves are the inheritors of all that man has been and has thought in the past. In that past, out of all man's many searchings for an integrated way of life, two main theories have survived, each struggling for dominance over the other and over the lives of men.

**AUTOCRACY IN SOCIAL AGENCIES.** One of these philosophies is that of autocracy or paternalism. We have come to think that its chief exponents are the Nazis or fascists, but their defeat in the Second World War does not mean that their ideas of managing human lives are beaten. We should not have to look far for evidence of this fact. We have even observed some social agencies which seem run on that discredited principle. The number of autocratic agencies is becoming steadily smaller, however, because autocracy is unsuccessful in the long run. Its mode of expression is, "You do what I tell you and I'll do what's good for you." It is repressive, not creative. Almost any psychiatric clinic will demonstrate that exercise of continual repression is no way to run human lives or organizations, a nation or a world.

**DEMOCRACY THE VITAL WAY OF LIFE FOR AN AGENCY AS FOR AN INDIVIDUAL.** The other way of attaining an integrated life is the creative method. It is the way of democracy or of participation in government by the governed. We believe it calls out and develops the capacities of human beings as does no other way of life.

The Nazis were defeated in the Second World War by something more than the mere total physical resources of the component parts of the United Nations. We may well believe that that something was the creative power of the participative way of life, even though we recognize how imperfectly that principle still is applied in our own and other nations. It is the power of growth, of good will, of sharing. It is the bomb-like chain reaction of spirit striking fire from spirit and kindling a flame of mutual activity.

This power must prevail increasingly in the human affairs of an atomic age. This we must believe, or perish. But we do believe it, and we are applying this principle of participation more and more in all the phases of life. The practice of creative democracy is spreading in government, in business and industry, in social agencies. Slowly but surely the autocrat gives way to the democrat.

PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL MANAGEMENT. Of all human organizations, a social agency most heartily must follow these principles. For by its very nature a social agency is concerned with the rights and potentialities of human beings. It knows, by experience, the nobility of which all people are capable. It realizes that no one has yet discovered a limit to the possibilities in guiding and training human beings, whatever their ages and conditions. It is dedicated to the principle, stated or unstated, of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. As perhaps only the church can know it, though in a somewhat different way, the social agency works for and with the people. Necessarily, too, it works through them.

Surely, then, the social agency in which you are concerned can most fully achieve its purposes, actual and implied, if it strives steadily (albeit discreetly) toward the goal of the fullest practicable participation in policy making and management by all those persons who are responsible for or interested in its performance. This means a great many people, of many kinds and relationships to the agency.

It means officers and board members.

It means all the volunteer workers.

It means the paid executive and his professional staff.

It means, too, the clerical and maintenance staff, down to the maids and yardman (if any).

It means the contributors.

In many cases, too, it means the clients, members, patients, or other users and beneficiaries of the agency. Remember that little girl in the mental hygiene clinic? The staff learned something from her which enabled them to run the clinic more effectively and to help other children better. And surely the benefit which that little girl (and her mother, too) derived from that treatment did many things. It improved the community's regard for the clinic. It stimulated other parents to bring their children for treatment. Perhaps it increased the gifts of money by friends and neighbors to that clinic or to the community chest in which it shared.

The principle of participation is like a golden thread that is woven through all the human relationships of the agency.

And do not forget this, either, if it is a tax-supported agency, a branch of government, in which you are interested: Citizen voters often have a great deal to say, directly or through their elected representatives, about the funds that are appropriated and the ways in which they are spent for health and welfare service.

This principle of shared management applies not merely to the

operation of a single social agency but further to that of community councils of social agencies and of community chests which have been organized in most of our American urban communities to federate social agencies and citizens in co-operative and participative ventures.

You cannot get away from the principle of participation in social agency management. Mark well in the pages to come how it may be applied.

MANAGEMENT BY THE TOTALITY RATHER THAN BY THE MAJORITY. The principle and practice of participation means, obviously, that no social agency can be a one-man or one-woman organization. A social agency is a group activity. Hence one of the tasks of management is not to stop at securing technically excellent service by employees. Rather, management must carry the whole policy-making and operating personnel, as well as the constituency of the organization, along with it in thought and action with and for the community.

This co-operative attitude necessarily implies that opposition to a proposed course of action—by a board member, a committee member, a staff member, or a contributor—is not to be overcome merely by a majority vote or an executive order. The opposition must, if possible, be met by explanation or persuasion until the action taken is that of a thoroughly informed and unified group.

This attitude toward participation means, furthermore, that the person responsible for carrying out such a policy must always be sympathetic with the points of view of others. He must understand the sources of their opinions and be tolerant of their differences, patient with their hesitations, and willing to concede to the opinions of others when they seem well founded.

Indeed, participative practice really means a deeper relationship than democracy. Democracy implies government by the majority. Participative administration requires that he who administers has a responsibility for more than giving his constituency an opportunity to vote, informing them of his plans, and securing acquiescence of a majority in these plans.

Participative administration means a continuous endeavor to create new group ideas out of the old separate ideas of individuals. These newly erected group ideas will represent, as far as possible, the informed opinion of all persons who are members of the group. The group ideas will be willingly approved because they have been mutually created through shared thought and discussion. Participa-

tive management is often slower in obtaining immediate results than is autocracy or mere "majoritocracy." Happily, though, participation is surer and more permanent in the long run than are the other methods. What we have shared in making becomes a part of us.

To carry out a philosophy of participation in practice is not easy. Many people are self-assertive and wish to dominate rather than to share in decisions. Many people are impatient of the slow processes of group decision through discussion. Others are not mentally alert, or they do not wish to share in the responsibility of making decisions. Others are the emotional slaves of special interests and are not willing to concede to the general good. Such difficulties, however, merely emphasize the importance of the participative method in management. Indeed, the social agency thus operated is a little school of democracy. It can be an important factor in teaching these essentials, for application to larger areas of government and life.

**SOME EXAMPLES OF MISMANAGEMENT AND MALADMINISTRATION:** The idea of participation by all concerned in management is, in very truth, a counsel of perfection not often considered in the management of social agencies. Even when adopted in principle, it is but imperfectly practiced. Social work knows many one-man organizations. A hospital may practically be run by a long-lived president. A children's agency may be operated as the monopolized expression of a domineering veteran superintendent. A social settlement may be conducted in a magnificently paternalistic way by a dazzling head resident.

Some lady boards of managers still have their "matron" wait outside the door while they deliberate and then tell the alleged executive what it expects her to do. On the other hand, some boards of directors still are dominated by revered executives who expect all their proposals to be rubber-stamped, or who offer resignation whenever they are crossed. (We know one of these executives who resigned once too often. His resignation was accepted.)

Not a few self-perpetuating social agencies make benevolent gestures of inviting contributors to annual meetings through vague semi-public announcements. These agencies really hope that none will come and that if any by chance do attend they will approve—as they always do—the completely predigested proposals for program and officers which are steam-rolled through these meetings. In some social agencies the opinion of the employees is never sought by their autocratic executives.

All these examples, however, represent the lingering survival of

an old order of autocracy and paternalism, but this is progressively disappearing from the administration of social work as it is from business and industry.

By increasing application of the participative principle to administration, social work will be able to improve steadily in its everyday job of human service. Moreover, it will make definite progress in its long-time task of getting the whole community to assume responsibility for social problems and for reducing the virulence of those conditions in community life which make social work necessary. Participative democracy in social work is but one phase of that creative sharing of responsibility and action which will some day be the distinctive feature of a co-operative world commonwealth.

#### QUESTIONS

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1. Give examples of autocracy or paternalism in:
  - a. Political government.
  - b. Industrial management.
  - c. Social agencies.
  - d. Other fields of human activity.
2. What are the good and the bad features of autocracy or paternalism thus expressed?
3. What examples of participative democracy can you find in these same fields?
4. What are its strengths and weaknesses?
5. How and to what extent would you apply this philosophy of participation, in some agency you know, to:
  - a. The board of directors?
  - b. The committees?
  - c. The professional staff?
  - d. The clerical and administrative staff?
  - e. The volunteers?
  - f. The contributors or members?
  - g. The clients of the agency?
  - h. Other social agencies?
  - i. The community at large?