Chapter XV

The Employment of a Staff

SOUND PERSONNEL PRACTICE FUNDAMENTAL TO EFFICIENCY. All of the foregoing material considerations will amount to nothing unless the staff is carefully selected, is happy with its pay, its hours, and its conditions of work, and is animated by respect for its directors and executive and by loyalty to the principles of the agency. The personnel practices of the organization are those procedures which determine, as it were, the mental and emotional background of the agency's work, as distinguished from the physical background. Personnel practices must be sound in execution as well as in principle if the organization is to do its work well.

But a little warning is necessary here. Inasmuch as the present book is written from the point of view of applying business methods to social work, this statement of personnel practice will relate more to the clerical, stenographic, and accounting staffs as the business employees of the organization than to the professional staff. Much of what is said will in all certainty fit the professional workers as well. Still, the procedures outlined here are considered primarily from the point of view of the executive's relations to his direct administrative assistants and of his and their relationship to the employees who carry on the functions of the agency. Professional practices vary from social agency to social agency according to the special services rendered, but business procedure seems fairly standard in all fields of social work.

EFFECTIVE EMPLOYMENT METHODS ESSENTIAL. Before an organization can apply any principles of personnel administration, there must be employees on whom to practice them. Indeed, effective employment is itself a creator of morale. It may therefore be considered a basic personnel practice. Beyond a doubt, to secure competent employees is one of the greatest problems of the social agency, both from its own point of view and from that of the employee. If he

is not well chosen and thoroughly suited to the job he is to fill, he may cost the organization great loss through inadequate treatment of clients, patients, or other constituents of the organization; through loss of public good will; through disaffection of other members of the staff; through financial loss due to unnecessary expenditure, to waste of material, to damage of equipment, or to the inability of the organization to collect funds it otherwise might have secured from members or contributors; or through ineffective cooperation between the employee's own agency and others. An indirect loss caused by ineffective selection of employees is that of time and effort spent in training the ill-chosen employee to do properly the work which he should have been able to handle adequately in the beginning. Still greater is the loss if the round peg has to be plucked from the square hole (in other words, has to be "fired"). Thereupon all this task of employment and training has to be repeated—with someone else who might better have been employed in the first place. Moreover, the "firee," in his unsatisfactory period of service, may have built up loyalties to himself on the part of uncritical board members, staff members, volunteers, and constituents or members which will bring ill will to the "hard-hearted" executive. Better do your hiring right in the first place!

On the other hand, from the worker's point of view, the organization has a responsibility to employ carefully and wisely. The job presumably is his only means of livelihood. He may have left another reasonably good position to take the new one and thereby lost the chance of experience, advancement, and professional reputation he might have attained had he stayed on his old job or taken some other new one. If he is not able to make good with the organization, he loses time in vocational advancement. Furthermore, through failure to do the work well he may lose prestige, become discouraged, and consequently be less well fitted for his next job. If he is discharged or leaves precipitately he may suffer an interval of unemployment which will entail direct economic loss, in addition to the possibility that he will be unable to secure another job which will be as good as the one he had left.

The social agency therefore must develop a sound employment policy and apply it effectively. Policy and practice must give the worker every chance to make good, must help him to adjust to other jobs within the organization if the one for which he is employed does not give him full scope for his best work, and must allow his discharge only as a last resort.

POSITION SPECIFICATIONS. As a preliminary to effective employment, the social agency should make for each professional and non-professional job a position specification (or job analysis). This is a list of the requirements in personality, education, training, experience, and skill desirable for competent performance. In clerical work these specifications will include the kinds of machines which the operator should be able to run skillfully, the special kinds of manual dexterity required, the rate of speed necessary, and so on. Requirements of physical health should be included if the work is of an arduous nature—such as that of a visiting nurse who must climb up and down stairs while carrying a heavy bag of supplies and equipment—or if the job involves fairly severe and continuous physical exertion, as in the case of the operation of some office machines. Every position in the organization, as a matter of fact, should be carefully analyzed as a preliminary to the standard practice instructions which will be discussed later. One of the most important uses of position specifications, however, is found in employment. The specifications can be used as a basis for questioning the applicant, for describing the work to him if preliminary negotiations have to be done by letter, for writing advertisements to secure prospective workers, and for securing from references their opinion of the applicant's qualifications for the work as outlined. Position specifications submitted to the applicant will help greatly in eliminating without interview those who are manifestly unfitted. "Know the job and then know your applicant for the job" is a good rule.

SOURCES OF WORKERS. With the requirements of the position well in mind through analysis, the executive or other employment officer of the social agency may proceed to tap the various sources through which workers may be secured.

(*a*) *Governmental Agencies Follow the Merit System.* An agency which is a branch of government—such as a department of public welfare, health, or recreation—will, it is to be presumed, secure its new employees through the personnel office of the unit of government of which the agency is part. It may be taken for granted that most of the governmental agencies which fall within the scope of this book follow the merit system. The administrator in that case will have to use the procedures for securing new personnel which are prescribed by that system. Those procedures vary more or less in various jurisdictions and can hardly be discussed here. Our own ideas on the subject are presented in a chapter of our book *The Public Welfare Administrator.*

We might interject here that a good deal of loose terminology is found in the field of employment. Various authorities disagree as to the names to be applied to the processes and material used. Let us presume, for our purpose, that each job in the agency has first been explained in a written job description which tells what the incumbent is supposed to do. Then each job is classified according to major and minor title—as, for example, "clerk, junior." After this, position specifications are set up for each classified job. Sometimes, as noted above, position specifications are called the "job analysis." If you prefer another name, you might call it "qualification standards" as does the Federal Security Agency, which in *A Personnel Program,* its Training Manual No. 3, published in 1944 by its Division of Personnel Administration, describes them as follows: "Qualification standards for a position are statements of the amounts of various knowledges, abilities, skills, and personal qualities necessary for successful performance of the work of that position, together with objective evidences of those characteristics."

Private agencies, as well as public agencies which do not always have to use governmental personnel units, may find useful the suggestions which follow.

(*b*) *Consult Present Staff Members.* Members of the present staff afford an obvious first source of potential workers. If staff members come up to satisfactory standards of personality and performance they are likely to know people of the same capacities who would like to work with the organization and with whom they in turn would like to work. The staff member, moreover, has a feeling of pride in being able to recommend someone. Reciprocally, the new member starts out with a feeling of good will toward the staff because he secured the job through one of its members. Obviously, if the person so recommended is not employed, the employing officer must be careful to avoid any chance of offense when he explains the reason to the staff member, but explanation will not be difficult if the agency utilizes proper methods and standards of employment.

Board members may also be used as a source of job candidates, so long as they do not suggest relatives.

(*c*) *Employment Agencies.* The source perhaps most generally used in obtaining new employees is the employment agency. Unfortunately there is no central, national placement agency for all professional social workers. The Social Work Vocational Bureau of New York City specializes in case workers. Most of the national social work associations, such as the Boy Scouts of America and the

YWCA, operate their own personnel departments. To them the local agency may turn when professional and executive positions are to be filled. In the local community, the branches of the United States Employment Service or of the State Employment Services may be used for clerical and stenographic help. Another resource may be a reputable commercial employment bureau (beware of the unethical kind!). Further, the typewriter agencies often have lists of stenographers and typists and will help the employer to secure suitable people. Then, too, local agencies of office machinery companies usually have lists of skilled operators. The sales representatives realize that the availability of a competent operator may help to sell the machine and that a person with special training and experience will probably operate the equipment better than the unskilled workers who, without adequate training, might be put on the job by the purchaser of the equipment.

(*d*) *Advertising.* Advertising also may be effective in securing employees. National social work magazines, such as *The Survey,* and the publications of national agencies often carry advertisements for professional help. Local newspapers may be used for getting stenographers, clerks, and typists. Some discreet seekers for help through advertising do not give the name or address of the organization but merely describe the job and ask the applicant to write to a box number. It is much easier to sift out applications received in this way and to ask those who seem promising to come to the office for an interview than to see personally a large number of applicants, many of whom are entirely unsuited to the position.

One of the seminar that made a study of this book said he did not like "blind ads." We do, because they do not reveal to an unsatisfactory employee of the organization who may read it the fact that you may be looking for someone to replace him if you can find a good substitute. They also keep from the public such information about what your agency pays for jobs as might be misunderstood. They give you a chance to head off a lot of undesirable candidates. They enable you to select the candidates who are apparently best qualified for consideration, without the exertion of pressure from unqualified applicants or their "inspired" friends.

(*e*) *Educational Institutions.* Graduate schools of social work are obvious sources for professional personnel—either recent or imminent graduates who wish to begin their careers with this agency, or former graduates with whom the school has kept in touch. Students of social work who have taken their supervised field work training with

the agency often are employed later on its professional staff. Colleges and universities may suggest personnel for semi-professional positions. High schools and business colleges are good sources for office workers.

(*f*) *Volunteer Workers.* In addition, volunteer workers who have shown unusual aptitude may sometimes be taken on the employed staff. This is especially true when the volunteer has engaged in the social work of the organization and has perhaps taken special training to qualify himself better for the service which he has voluntarily rendered. Yet the executive must help the volunteer to adjust to the vigorous day-long procedures of the staff. His unpaid service may have habituated him to less strenuous activity within the agency.

(*g*) *Former Applicants.* Another source of personnel is the list of past applicants who did not seem so well qualified for the particular position as the one who was chosen but looked like good material for future reference when a suitable opening developed or when they had achieved more experience or training which would qualify them for similar jobs.

(*h*) *Employees of Other Agencies.* In some instances, rather than wait for people to be suggested or to apply for a position, the social agency may think it desirable to approach someone in another agency whose work has been noticed. In such a case, although the agency might approach the prospect directly, it is better, as a matter of ethical relationship with the other agency, to approach him through the executive of that agency. The right kind of executive would not try to dissuade one of his own employees from bettering himself professionally even though it meant losing him to another organization. Yet the executive should not give up an employee (provided he wants to keep him) without a little sales talk in which he shows the employee clearly the opportunities for satisfaction and advancement in his present work. It is a matter of professional courtesy for the employing officer of the first agency to make no offer to the prospective employee if there is objection on the part of the latter's employer. On the other hand, if the executive of the second agency were arbitrary in the matter, the employing officer might be justified in making his offer in spite of objection.

This point of ethics was vigorously opposed by Miss Lillian Quinn, who at the time of our first edition was secretary of the then Joint Vocational Service (for social workers) but now is Executive Secretary of the Westchester County Council of Social Agencies. Her experience is so important that her opinion is worth quoting:

I myself would not care to work for anyone who consulted my board or my executive before he consulted me, if he were thinking of considering me for a new job. I know of no circumstance under which I would want to be consulted first about a member of my staff. Any other than a direct approach to the employee herself is always at least discourteous. It is often unjust. If a person is mature enough and has the qualities essential to be trusted with the responsibilities of a social work job, even a beginning social work job, she can be trusted to handle fairly the question of a new opportunity, granted the agency she is with deals fairly.

We hate to disagree with so practiced an authority. Nevertheless it seems to us that the executive who tries to "steal" an employee from another organization without the consent of its executive runs the difficulty, if it is another social agency, of incurring ill will and lack of co-operation or, if it is a business house in the community, of creating antagonism which may represent a serious loss in public good will, in contributions, or in both.

We might add, as an employer who occasionally has lost personnel to other jobs, that we never offer a person a raise in pay to persuade him to stay with us. If he was not worth the higher salary with us before the outside offer came, he is not worth it afterward. We try to raise salaries within the minimum and maximum of the classification for each job, according to schedule and merit, and we are not to be pushed by pressure of other offers. Moreover, we are not moved by an ultimatum that a person will quit if he does not get a raise to which he is not yet entitled. His implied resignation is promptly accepted.

FILLING THE POSITION. Regardless of the source or way in which the applicant or prospect for the job is discovered, he should usually be employed only after a personal interview.

(*a*) *Personal Interview Desirable.* A personal interview is desirable even though letters from the applicant have indicated his probable interest and desirability for the position. Photographs, often required on governmental applications, do not always tell the current truth. Unless the candidate is well known to the employing officer from previous experience, a personal conference seems essential. Only in this way can the organization know in advance the person who is being employed.

A personal interview also gives the applicant a chance to know the organization and to "size up" the job thoroughly before he takes it. We once paid the expenses of a candidate for an important professional position to come halfway across the country to be inter-

viewed. Our minds met. She stayed with the agency over fifteen years before leaving for a better position. That was a good investment!

Private agencies usually pay the moving expenses of new personnel from out of town. Governmental agencies usually pay neither the traveling expenses of candidates nor the moving expenses of new employees. You are on your own with the government!

Sometimes it is possible to have a person in an agency similar to yours located in or near the candidate's home town interview him. That procedure, however, should be used, if at all, to eliminate undesirable candidates rather than actually to employ desirable ones. Better see them!

(*b*) *Application Blanks.* In addition to the correspondence which may have preceded the interview, a formal application blank is a great aid to effective employment. The use of a blank makes it possible, as a matter of form, to ask questions which might otherwise be difficult. It saves time in ascertaining the essentials of the candidate's ability. It provides a permanent record of his fundamental qualifications. It gives a specimen of his handwriting, if this is an important consideration in the work. A typical application blank—one used by the Community Chest and Council of Houston and Harris County, Texas—is reproduced herewith.

APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT
COMMUNITY CHEST AND COUNCIL
OF HOUSTON AND HARRIS COUNTY

Date _____

Name _____ *Address* _____ *Tel.* ____

Position Desired _____ *Salary Expected* _____

Single _____ Married _____ Widow-er _____ Dependents ____

Date of birth _____ Height ____ Weight ____ Hair ____ Eyes ____

Religious denomination _____ Place of Birth _____

How long have you lived in Houston? _____ Have you any relatives in the employ of the Community Chest and Council or its Agencies? _____

At present employed by _____

May we inquire of your present employer? _____ Has your application for bond ever been rejected? If so, state details. _____

EXPERIENCE

Check kinds of work and write in others in which you have had experience:

Bookkeeping _____ Stenographic _____
Calculating _____ Stencil Cutting _____
Clerical (General) _____ _____
Filing _____ _____

Check kind of Office Appliance you have had experience in operating:

Adding Machine _____ Ditto _____
Bookkeeping _____ Mail Machine _____
Calculating _____ Mimeograph _____
Dictating _____ PBX _____
Elliott Addressing Machine _____ Typewriter _____

Typing Speed _____ Dictation Speed _____

(Section below this line not to be filled out by applicant.)

Date employed _____ Position _____ Salary _____

Signed _____

EDUCATION

School or College	*Name and Location*	*Year From To*	*Course of Study*	*Year Graduated*
High School				
College				
Business College				
Other Training				

PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT

Dates		*Employer's Name & Address*	*Immediate Superior*	*Position Held*	*Salary*	*Reason for Leaving*
From	*To*					

REFERENCES (Not Relatives)

NAME	*ADDRESS*	*BUSINESS*	*Yrs. of Acquaintance*

This space may be used for any additional information you may wish to submit: _____

_____

I hereby affirm that my answers to the foregoing questions are true and correct. In the event of my employment to a permanent position with the Community Chest and Council, I agree to comply with the rules and regulations governing my employment. I agree to file my resignation TWO WEEKS prior to date effective, in the event I should terminate my employment.

It is my understanding that the FIRST THREE MONTHS of my employment are probationary, and if my services have not proved satisfactory my employment may be discontinued on a week's notice without prejudice.

(Signature of Applicant) _____

The reasons for the questions on this application blank are obvious. All the questions are pertinent to most positions, and the answer to any one of them may be a factor in influencing decisions in employment. They give an idea of the age, background, and qualifications of the applicant. The record of experience is valuable also for getting references from previous employers. Even the hobbies or recreations, if these are given, are a guide to the character and interests of the applicant. Such information may help to form an estimate of the sum total of his personality.

Religion, too, is important in choosing a person to work with a special group, especially if you want a diversity of points of view in your staff. We are aware that some governmental agencies prohibit questions about religion lest prejudice be exercised, but we are talking about *social* agencies which have a respect for all religious faiths and want to know the total personality of the candidate for a job.

The application blank need not be printed. It can be dittoed, mimeographed, or otherwise duplicated. Even in these more inexpensive forms the application blank will adequately serve the needs of the organization.

(*c*) *Conference with the Prospect.* The filled-out application blank is not, however, a sufficient basis for a decision on employment. As noted above, a personal discussion—based in part on the points brought out in the blank, in part on the job description and position specifications, and in part on a general sizing up of the individual—must supplement the blank.

In the first interview with the examiner the applicant should be made to feel at ease and free to express himself. All that in case work the examiner has learned about first interviews with clients should be utilized, if possible, in getting a complete picture of the applicant's personality and experience. Walter V. Bingham says, "The object of an interview is to get information, to give information, and to make a friend."

As to the method of conducting the interview, two social work executives have expressed themselves as follows:

"The information and impressions you get depend greatly upon the questions you ask and upon how you direct the conversation."

"I find that asking certain questions—as, for instance, 'What books have you read recently?' and 'What is some interesting magazine article you have read?'—are valuable."

These and other questions are calculated to bring out the prospect's special interests and to make him feel natural and tell about his real enthusiasms. This self-revelation will help to give to the employer that full understanding of the applicant which he seeks. It is well to ask why the candidate thinks he would like the prospective job and why he thinks he could perform it well. His attitude toward it will help to indicate whether he is a person who will fit into the organization.

The interview for important positions may take an hour or more. Just looking at the candidate is not enough. The appropriateness of his dress, his grooming, his poise, his alertness, and his ability to share in a discussion are all factors to be observed. All the time necessary to find out definitely whether the applicant will satisfactorily fill the job is well worth while if it results either in eliminating undesirable applicants or in securing an adequate employee. Often the person who seems the least promising at the beginning of an interview develops into the best prospect. On the other hand, the one who at first appears most promising may, after a thoroughgoing discussion, show attitudes and gaps in personality which will disqualify him.

(*d*) *Describing the Job to the Prospect.* In addition to finding

out all about the applicant, it is only fair and wise to tell him as much as possible about the job itself. A good way to find out what sort of person the applicant is would be to ask him what he would like to know about the job. The more he wants to know, the more competent he is likely to be. The nature of his questions will be a good guide to his competence.

Furthermore, the interviewing officer should not only tell the applicant the advantages of the job, but its disadvantages as well. It is only fair to be as frank as possible. In this way, as one executive suggests, a challenge may be presented which the right candidate will enthusiastically accept. Also, if the applicant at the beginning knows the worst about the work he will not be disappointed later by certain aspects of it which might not have been discussed during the interview.

Moreover, he should be encouraged to investigate the organization itself so that he can determine, in view of all the facts, whether he wants to work in it. An experienced applicant will probably do this anyway. Nevertheless, the employing officer should encourage investigation. It is unwise to employ a person who will become dissatisfied and disappointed. He will probably soon resign because of factors about which he was not informed, or his efficiency will be lowered by his discontent. Employment is a reciprocal relationship. It should embody those qualities of participation which were discussed at the beginning of this book as essential to the satisfactory conduct of a social agency.

(*e*) *Supplemental Interviews.* In addition to the personal interview by the employing officer, it will often be found helpful to have the applicant interviewed by others. A social case worker might be interviewed by the case supervisor and by the district superintendent under whom she is to work; the prospective secretary of a public relations committee, by the chairman and some of the members of the committee; and prospective sub-executives, by some of the other sub-executives with whom they will work. It is expedient, and helpful as well, to have important employees interviewed by the president and other officers of the organization or by influential board members. Some organizations have employment or personnel committees of staff members who interview and discuss applicants for positions. Others have committees of board members with whom important applicants are discussed and whose members interview the candidates.

These procedures do not in any way abrogate the executive's right

to employ anyone he selects within the budgetary requirements of the organization (if he chooses to exercise that right). It is desirable, however, for officers of the organization to share responsibility for the employment of staff members with whom they will come in more than casual contact. The advice of those laymen, based on their own experience, can be very helpful to the executive. Furthermore, if the employee fails to come completely up to expectations, the blame rests not on the employing officer alone but also on the total group who shared in the decision. These methods of group employment utilize our set principle of participation.

(*f*) *Grading the Applicant.* A valuable adjunct to the interview is to have each one who sees the applicant grade him on some sort of point system. This might be set up under the following headings: (1) manner and appearance, including physical qualifications, voice, and poise; (2) education and training; (3) previous experience, including type of supervision, kinds of office equipment used, working conditions, and so on; (4) maturity and stability, including reasons for leaving jobs and schools, nature of social contacts, extent to which decisions are dominated by family, and so forth; (5) leadership capacity, including experience, apparent initiative, flexibility, and the like. A scale of 20 percentage points may be used for each of the five headings, with a possible total of 100 per cent for the nonexistent perfect individual.

The interviewer, when grading the applicant, should keep in front of himself the position specifications for the job and should grade the candidate in terms of the requirements of that job only. The ratings of different interviewers can then be combined and used as a factor in the ultimate decision. Part of the procedure of the employing officer should be to report to those who have advised him on the applicant what action was taken, and, if it was contrary to their recommendation, why.

(*g*) *Dividing the Task of Employment.* In some organizations employment may be divided up as a matter of executive responsibility. In a case work agency, for example, the case supervisor or assistant general secretary might interview all applicants for case work positions, subject to the approval of the executive, and the chief clerk or office manager might be responsible for the employment of the clerical force. In small organizations the executives presumably do all the employing.

(*h*) *Use of References.* The interview should be supplemented by inquiry of those who know the prospective employee and his

work. Sometimes the applicant supplies letters of reference addressed "to whom it may concern." These are usually of little value, because their writers know the bearer is likely to read them. (Who wouldn't?) Usually the applicant will submit a list of persons with whom the employing officer may get in touch.

When writing to these references the employer may make effective use of the position specifications to describe the position for which the applicant is being considered. These, however, do not always meet the situation, and sometimes they are not clearly enough expressed to be understood by an outsider. In one instance, a young man was being considered for publicity work, and one of the requirements for the job was that he should be able to prepare a "house organ," or printed bulletin. A minister whose name had been given as a reference wrote that he didn't know whether the young man could play a house organ, but he thought the youth was musical and if he didn't know how he could learn!

If the "referee" cannot be interviewed personally or by telephone, probably the best plan is to make up a questionnaire on the general qualities desired in employees and to mail it along with the position specifications, a courteous personal letter of request, and—this is important—a stamped return envelope.

References (particularly written ones) must be taken with a grain of salt. Yet, together with that salt, they may prove a valuable addition to the food for thought already provided in the application blank and interview.

(*i*) *Physical Examinations.* In addition to the varied information which is gathered in these ways, physical examinations may serve as a further basis for constructive decision in employment. Although few social agencies require this kind of examination for all their employees, it is a requirement widely used by health agencies and by industrial and business establishments.

Knowledge of the applicant's health and of its relationship to the work proposed may protect him from undertaking duties that would result in his physical or mental breakdown. Manifestly this would be bad for the employee and costly to the organization. A breakdown might mean disruption of the agency's work and loss of the employee's services, either temporarily or permanently, with perhaps payment to him over the period of his illness.

The physical examination should probably be one of the last preliminaries to employment so as to save the cost of unnecessary medical service. Clues to the applicant's health and to the need

for physical examination, if it is not merely routine, may be gained by putting on your questionnaire to previous employers, "How many days have been lost per year by this employee because of illness?"

When the applicants have been sifted out, the survivor or survivors should be subjected to such an examination. The physician (preferably a woman for the women employees) may be one in private practice, who is retained by the agency at a flat rate. Otherwise, examinations may be made by a clinic, a hospital, or some other social agency with which special arrangements have been made. The examiner should always be a person responsible to the agency and one who performs his task in accordance with mutually agreed standards.

Under no circumstances should a certificate from the candidate's personal physician be accepted, because the agency in that case has no control over the nature or thoroughness of the examination and the physician may be too charitable toward the infirmities of his patient. Of course, many personal physicians will render this service adequately; some, however, will not.

Competent agency-controlled physical examination, as a final prerequisite to employment, may result in complete disqualification of the applicant because his psychosomatic condition obviously is not adapted to the requirements of the job. Again, the outcome may be a recommendation for improvement in posture or for corrective measures—such as the fitting of glasses—which will enable him to fill the position satisfactorily. If the applicant has met all of the other requirements except that of health, and if he feels that he can handle the work in spite of the adverse recommendations of the physician, he may be employed with the understanding that the organization has no obligation for the payment of extended sick leave in the case of illness or the development of infirmity. On the other hand, the requirements and equipment of the job may be modified to meet the handicap of the employee. At any rate, the medical examination enables the agency to make its decision regarding employment with full knowledge of the physical facts involved.

(*j*) *Mental, Emotional, and Vocational Tests.* Mental, emotional, and vocational tests also may be used with profit. Probably the best procedure for most agencies is to use one of the increasing number of aptitude testing agencies, if one is available at a reasonable cost.

If this is not possible, an intelligence test of standard type may be given to all promising applicants for work. A knowledge of the grade of intelligence required for a given job will help to eliminate those who obviously cannot measure up to its intellectual requirements. This information also will lessen the difficulty sometimes encountered in hiring a person who is more intelligent than the job requires and will eventually become bored with the job.

Mental tests are not conclusive and should be used only in supplementing the observations of the employing officer. If he thought the prospect a good one yet the intelligence test was unsatisfactory, the applicant might still be employed, but with a mental reservation on the part of the employing officer to watch him carefully to see if he is able to come up to standard. On the other hand, if the employing officer thought well of the applicant and the intelligence test indicated his satisfactory mental status, one judgment would confirm the other. Again, a poor opinion on the part of the employing officer might be confirmed by a low ranking in the intelligence test. Tests so far available largely indicate common sense, education, and life experience. They are not dependable guides to native intelligence. In so far, however, as the qualities tested are those which determine to a large extent a person's suitability for a job, these tests may be considered a valuable aid to employment.

Emotional handicaps may be more serious than mental shortcomings. Some progress has been made in testing for emotional stability. Such tests generally require administration by a trained person. The social agency which wishes to use them will find it wise to consult an industrial psychologist or a psychiatric clinic, to secure competent administration and evaluation.

In addition to specific tests, the agency may use vocational or aptitude tests. Excellent tests for typists and clerks have been devised and give valuable indications as to accuracy and speed in fundamental office processes. Several of these tests are self-administering—the applicant handles them himself and does what he is instructed to do. A key to each is supplied by the publisher. Any intelligent employing officer can grade these tests.

In place of formal vocational tests, improvised ones may be used. For example, a typist might be given a piece of fairly complicated typing, and her accuracy and speed carefully noted. The same test given to the present employees in that job classification and to a number of applicants would afford a ready means of comparison.

Vocational tests may be especially useful for aptitudes on particular jobs for which specially prepared tests are not available. For example, a prospective publicity man might be asked to write a feature story about some phase of the work of the organization. A prospective case worker might prepare a "first interview" on a family which had just applied for assistance. A prospective club leader might be asked to outline a constructive program for a group of boys described in some detail by the employing officer. Obviously only a well-qualified person (or persons) could satisfactorily rate the candidate on the basis of such professional material.

(*k*) *Standards of Education and Training.* The applicant's training and education are important considerations. Equally valuable are the reputation of the school where that training was obtained and the standing attained by the student. Weight should also be given to the experience and maturity of the worker, the kinds of organizations in which he has worked, his general reputation on each job, and the reports of his employers.

Many organizations require that all social workers possess master's degrees from accredited graduate schools of social work with field training in the agency's special work, or graduation from an accredited school of social work plus experience in an accredited social agency.

Each organization should be continually observant of its own standards. It should apply them as rigorously as circumstances will permit, but judiciously (in order that exception can be made for the unusual person in whom personality and native talent compensate for gaps in education and experience). If there are exceptions, however, they should be made consciously and not because of failure to learn the qualifications of the individual.

Many organizations also have educational requirements for their clerical and business staffs. It seems wise in general office work to require that every employee shall be as least a high-school graduate with specific business training. As a rule, when a person is employed who has not the established qualifications (unless he is an older person with long and unusual experience) the employer sooner or later has occasion to regret that they were not enforced at the time of employment.

(*l*) *Experience.* Experience also is a factor in employment. In general it is wise for an organization which employs social workers to make sure that their experience has been in similar agencies or

in those where the experience is readily adaptable to that of the new agency. Social work has become very much specialized. It is well for those who choose specific fields of practice to stick to them, unless there is some strong reason for a change.

Not only professional social workers, but clerical and business workers as well, may be advantageously selected in part because of their kindred experience. For example, a community chest once employed, for checking a list of contributors, a girl who had long had experience in checking prospective customers for a large real estate firm. She proved valuable to the chest because she knew the principles of the work involved and was already familiar with many of the names.

(*m*) *Background.* General background is also a factor in employment. Everything else considered, the person who has read most widely, traveled most extensively, lived under the most diverse conditions, and thought most deeply is likely to be the most useful on a given job. He has resources on which to draw in his relationships with fellow staff members, clients, and the community. He can grasp the significance of the relationship of his work to that of his own and of other organizations.

(*n*) *Personality.* The qualifications of experience, training, and background are only three-quarters of the picture, which must be complete if employment is to be done well. The other quarter is personality. Each position has its own requirements in that respect, and these should be met as adequately as possible.

Appearance is important for the sake of the effect on the public and on the client. Character is fundamental. Adaptability is desirable in many jobs. Enthusiasm may be essential, especially if it must be communicated to others. Friendliness is vital to all satisfactory human relationships. Sincerity is necessary. Tact is indispensable in negotiations. Liking and understanding of people are fundamental. A good sense of humor is a desirable ingredient for any member of the staff. Neatness is essential. Outward appearance is an indication of inward character. The person who neglects himself and is not trim will probably not be neat, clean, or orderly in his work. The balance of evidence would be against him.

Among other qualities sought are alertness, professional ambition, accuracy, courtesy, speed, honesty, interest in the work, dependability, co-operativeness, common sense, teachability, confidence in speaking, good enunciation, willingness, and lack of eccentricities or

habits which would be offensive to those with whom the employee came in contact and upon whose co-operation the success of the job depends.

This list of desirable traits does not mean that all employees should be set in standard molds. Still, the employing officer should have in mind all the requirements of the job from the personal point of view and should see that they are met as far as possible. If the candidate lacks some of the desirable qualities he should be so strong in others that the lack will be counterbalanced.

(*o*) *Age.* Age will sometimes make a difference in the consideration of a candidate for a position. A person may be too young to meet certain situations, or so old that it would be unwise to take him for a position which required long-time service and steady advancement in specialized skill and ability.

(*p*) *Religion.* The religion of the employee might be important in some jobs. For example, a non-Jewish case worker might have trouble in working adequately with an orthodox Jewish family.

(*q*) *Race.* Race also sometimes makes a difference. The employing officer should hold in mind community opinion as well as the attitude of the other members of his staff.

(*r*) *Acceptability to Existing Staff.* An important consideration in selecting staff members is their acceptability to the other members. A like-minded and mutually agreeable staff will get better results than one in which personalities jangle and in which attitudes toward life and work are so at variance that no harmony is possible.

The suggested quartering of the values of training, experience, background, and personality does not indicate that precisely even fractions can or should be carefully observed. After all, the individual is the sum total of all his personality, all his training, all his experience. One job may require more personality than training. Another may require technique above all things, whereas personality may be less important. It is wise in the first case not to sacrifice personality for the sake of skill and in the second case not to make too many concessions to personality when the need is for technical excellence. The discriminating employer will estimate the relative weight of the requirements for the job to be filled and then try to secure the highest possible degree of excellence in each respect.

(*s*) *Marital Status.* The candidate's marital status and number of dependents may also make some difference in the advisability of his employment. If the job is one that requires a great deal of overtime at certain periods and the husband of the prospective

employee objects to this, the wife obviously should not be employed. In the same way, the number of persons dependent on the applicant may have a bearing on the question. If the cost of their support is so great that the applicant will be continually worried because the salary offered is not sufficient, good vocational guidance by the prospective employer should help him get a more remunerative job in some other organization. Married women are often more understanding as case workers than unmarried women. Either with no prospect of children or with their children off their hands, married women also may be more responsible and steady as clerical workers than girls whose chief interest in life is the possibility of marriage.

(*t*) *Relationship to Staff and Board Members.* Further, the applicant's family or personal relationship, if any, to other members of the staff or board might be important. Ordinarily it is unwise for an executive to employ any member of his own family, lest the charge of nepotism be made. Employment of relatives is also undesirable because they may not respond well to office discipline. Moreover, other members of the staff may feel that tales are taken home to the executive and that undue influence is exerted on him in respect to his attitude toward them. It may sometimes be inadvisable to employ two members of the same family on the staff, because they can so easily discuss at home the work of the organization and magnify difficulties and irritations.

It is equally inadvisable to employ relatives or intimate friends of board members, who may carry tales of the methods of the organization which are misunderstood or misrepresented. Other staff members may also suspect favoritism in promotion or in assignment of work because of such an employee's relationship with the board member. The employing officer should always guard against influence in determining whether to employ a given individual. He should also avoid any possible suspicion that influence has been exerted or may be a factor in the staff member's relationship to his job.

TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT IN WRITING. As a sort of "clincher" to employment, it is wise to put its exact terms in writing. Such a statement need not be a printed and signed contract. A letter is sufficient. The original is given to the employee; the carbon copy is filed by the agency with his application, references, and any other pertinent material as part of the individualized personnel record. The letter of confirmation should include an exact statement of

the work to be performed, special arrangements as to unusual hours or as to length of vacation, special leave of absence for education, probationary period, initial pay, amounts and intervals of advance in pay, and any other matters which may be outside the general provisions of the office manual or the accepted practice of the organization. A letter of this nature will prevent many arguments, will withstand unjust claims that may be made on the organization, and will prevent difficulties which might arise from misunderstood verbal agreements.

Some social agencies have come in recent years to use formal contracts, for definite periods of employment, renewable by mutual agreement. These agencies seem well satisfied with their experience. Such contracts would appear to be more binding on the employer than on the employee who is dissatisfied or wishes to move to another agency even if he has a contract. Personlly, we should not wish to keep anyone to whom honor and obligation would not be more binding than any contract. Further, an employee bound by contract against his desire would probably lose in effectiveness as a staff member. Moreover, we should not wish a contract to limit an employee's opportunities for professional advancement. When he wants to go, let him go and wish him good luck!

NOTIFY THOSE NOT EMPLOYED. When a job has been filled, the organization ought to notify all the unsuccessful candidates who have seriously considered it, telling them (in diplomatic phraseology) why they were unsuccessful. This procedure is a matter of justice to the ones not chosen, so that they may know they are free to accept some other position. It is also a matter of fairness, since they will know why (in positive, not negative terms) the other person was employed, and this knowledge may be helpful to them ingetting similar jobs later.

Such a practice is a matter not only of ordinary human decency but also of good public relations. Each unsuccessful applicant is a potential "booster" or "knocker" for the organization. If he is courteously informed by letter that the position has been filled he is in a much pleasanter frame of mind than if he hears nothing at all. Courteous treatment is further important for the reason that candidates rejected because a better qualified person was available at the moment may later be worth considering for this or another position in the agency. A file should be kept of rejected but promising applicants. How they were handled on their initial application naturally will make a difference in their later availability.

QUESTIONS

1. In the work of some typical social agency you know, what advantages or disadvantages may be observed as the result of the employment policy it follows?

2. Does this social agency make continual analyses and maintain adequate position specifications of its various jobs? If so, what principles are followed?

3. From what sources does this agency secure names of prospective workers?

4. What is its policy in approaching employees of other agencies?

5. Does the agency always give personal interviews to applicants for positions?

6. Does the agency use an application blank? If so, what are the chief items of inquiry?

7. How is the conference with the prospective worker carried out?

8. How are applicants rated, if at all?

9. Who is responsible for employment in this agency?

10. What use is made of references?

11. What use is made of physical examinations?

12. What use is made of mental, emotional, and vocational tests?

13. What standards of education, training, experience, and background does this agency enforce in regard to its various jobs?

14. What requirements of personality does it make?

15. What is its policy toward the marital status of the worker?

16. What is its policy toward the relationship of the prospective employee to other staff members or to board members?

17. Are the terms of employment put in writing?

18. Are unsuccessful candidates for jobs notified of the action taken?

19. How, in your opinion, might any of these procedures be improved?