

PROMULGATION OF STANDARDS BY THE TAYLOR SOCIETY¹

BY

WILLIAM O. LICHTNER²

I. INTRODUCTION

AT just this period in the growth of the Taylor Society it looks as though the most important work before it is the determination and promulgation of standards.

The Taylor Society, originally the Society to Promote the Science of Management, was a natural development. It started with the gathering in 1911 of a few men who had been in personal touch with Dr. Taylor. Some had known him intimately and had had the privilege of seeing him work and of working with him. It was natural that after his death and in his memory they should conceive of giving the Society his name. A nucleus being formed, growth was inevitable. Other men had studied his work and had gained therefrom an impulse to follow him.

The purpose of the Society is to accentuate and perpetuate Dr. Taylor's contribution to industry. What we are going to bring out this evening is a way of doing this. In other words, we are going to concentrate on the idea of the promulgation of standards by the Taylor Society, for we believe that it is in this way that Dr. Taylor's work can best be carried forward.

What was the essence of Dr. Taylor's big contribution to the world? At the Bethlehem Steel Co., for instance, thousands, yes, many thousands of dollars, were placed at his disposal for experimentation to determine standards. This work did not stop at the Bethlehem Steel Co., however. It has been perpetuated and the whole industrial world is availing itself of the results. But the principle that makes these results possible is the original principle—the determination and application of standards.

The Taylor Society is of course the last place in the world where there is any need of preaching a sermon on the abstract principle of the necessity of standards.

Probably half of us spend half our time preaching this principle to our clients,—talking standards from morning to night. Nevertheless there is always opportunity for us to do a little housecleaning of our own. We are agreed on the fundamental principles for which we stand, as regards the science and the art of administration and of management. But we ought to be able to *define* all the principles on which we stand together, and agree as to certain models or ideals of procedure.

Of what would such a movement as we have in mind consist? The knowledge and experience of the members of the Society has already resulted in the establishment here and there of standards in individual plants. The movement we have in mind consists in the systematic pooling of this knowledge and experience and the making available of these to every other member of the Society, not only to its present membership but to its membership for all time.

Thus we shall be laying a sure foundation on which others may build, just as we have built up on the broad foundation laid by the father of scientific management. Unless they are thus grounded and have standards to which they can adhere, the younger men coming into the profession are sure to drift.

Let us keep well in mind that the Taylor system is not synonymous with a set of forms and practices which can be put into print and enclosed between two covers, and then applied to every concern. It is not a matter of visiting a plant where Taylor methods are applied, making a collection of their forms, taking them back to one's shop, and installing them. This doubtless sounds like a pure supposition, but novices and often experienced executives have been known to do this, and then have been inclined to curse the system because it did not work.

Another thing the Taylor system does not do is to force upon every organization with which it comes into contact, all the standards that have been set up in its name. On the contrary, all equipment already in use in the plant should be utilized as far

as possible. It is the use of knowledge and experience to adapt the standards to the particular plant.

In a degree the process of management work is common to all plants. Thus this harvesting of experience and practice would be of immense benefit to the client as well as to the engineer. Furthermore, we believe that such an institution as is proposed for our Society would make an appeal to the executive. He would feel that something tangible is being brought out. At the same time he would see that the ideals of the Society are broad and its aims far-reaching, that it is made up of engineers who are pooling their knowledge in the interests of industry. We believe that such an effort successfully carried on would thus convince the heads of industries that it is worth while for them to ally themselves with such a body. Most important of all, it would help to establish our position as true representatives of Dr. Taylor, whose work was never for the day or for the year, but for the permanent, far-reaching achievement.

What Dr. Taylor accomplished meant many sacrifices, and affords the finest example of the fact that when a man is impelled by the right motive his thought is not that the benefits of his labors shall be for himself alone. If then this undertaking, which we can only briefly indicate tonight, shall mean some additional effort on the part of each of us, I believe we have enough breadth of vision so that we shall not falter before the task.

Some of you no doubt are saying: Yes, that sounds good, but is the undertaking practicable; how can it be worked out? After all these contributions of data are brought together how can they be utilized; how can these standards be established; just how can they be permanently available?

The main heads under which we have treated this subject of promulgation of standards, and which the author feels should have foremost attention in any organized efforts for such promulgation are:

1. Standard Terms
2. The Functions and Executive Titles of a Standard Organization.
3. Policy on Bonus Payments
4. Policy on Base Rates and Total Earnings.
5. List of books for Reference in Industrial Management.

This idea which I am proposing tonight is not anything new, for years ago when the Society was first

formed we had discussions on methods of accumulating data, i. e., the actual times determined by time study used in the establishment of standards, and of putting this into a shape that would make it generally available. The task looked so big, however, and the members capable of combining on the undertaking were so busy with actual performance, that the matter ended where it began.

The idea was good, except for the fact that we were trying to develop a finished product before laying a foundation upon which to build this ideal. No one would expect to develop a champion football team, which requires a perfect understanding between all the men no matter what may come up, without training them first in the rudimentary principles of the game, and by their actually doing some real practice, teaching them how to work with the others. It means two things: first, that a body of men with the necessary qualifications have banded themselves together with a definite object in mind; and second, that they take the time necessary to develop the technique.

In our first endeavors we thought merely of the finished product, which will develop later from the foundation which we should now try to lay.

II. PLAN OF PROCEDURE

Several members of the Society have received advance copies of this paper, and have been asked to prepare a written or verbal discussion of it. This should form a basis for discussion tonight, which in turn should arouse the interest of those who have not had this same opportunity. It is not to be expected, and it would not be possible, to reach definite decisions tonight, but it is proposed that this material be turned over to a committee whose function it shall be to make a study of the subject, then plan a campaign for getting together the practices of the various members and then decide on definite practice. Their plans can finally be submitted to the Society as a whole for revision or adoption.

With the proper development of this procedure, the next point would be to have sent in copies of time study data and rates set from those data. Some practical plan for making a study of the conditions under which the data were taken and developed would be devised, and eventually the Society should be able to accomplish the big object, which, as stated above, we discussed shortly after the inception of the Society. This plan seems entirely practicable, be-

¹A paper presented at a meeting of the Taylor Society held at Rochester, N. Y., May 7, 1920.

²The Thompson & Lichtner Co., Boston, Mass.