

THE WORKER'S REACTION TO SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT¹WILLIAM R. LEISENSON²

WE ought to be clear as to what we mean by management and I may illustrate the idea that I have of it by something that happened in my own family.

The problem was up to me as daddy to get my little boy to wash his hands before dinner the other day, and naturally while I may tell managers how they ought to run their business, when it comes to managing my own I do not always do as I preach. I told the boy, "You go up and wash your hands." He had some ideas of his own about it, and started to argue, when my wife said: "Lee, you remember that little book that gives a list of the rights of childhood? And you remember there is one right that every child has, the right to be washed before every meal? It is one of your inalienable rights. You have a right to be washed." He promptly got up and went to wash his hands.

If the question of managing that situation was to ascertain my authority as the head of the family and to prove that I can get him to wash whether he likes it or not, then my method was better. But if the purpose of management is to get the results, the hands washed in this case, production of services in your cases, then my wife's is the better method. If we could only get over to managers the idea that the assertion of authority ought to be minimized; that authority is not the important thing, but it is the result for which the industry is organized that we want; if we could get them to forget about their authority, I think they would have less trouble in getting production results from wage earners.

Sometimes I wish that all managers could have the experience that a father had in a courtroom in Wisconsin where he was trying to assert his authority. I think it would teach them this same lesson that I was taught in my own family. The State of Wisconsin had occasion to prosecute a family that didn't send a boy to the continuation school. The employ-

er said he was willing to give the boy time to go, it was the family's fault. The family was brought into court and the father said: "I wanted him to go but mother wouldn't let him." The mother said: "I wanted him to go but father would not let him." The judge asked: "Who is the head of this family?" The father said: "I am." "All right then; you get thirty days."

Management is an art, a method of doing things, a method of getting things done. It is the opposite, in a way, of science, science meaning classified knowledge. The man who is able to gather knowledge and classify it and get the implications of that knowledge, may be the worst man, most inefficient, when it comes to applying that knowledge. I want to make the distinction clear between management, which is an art, and knowledge of things, science. I think it is very important. You have heard of Christian Socialism. Some one has said it is neither socialism nor Christianity; and scientific management is sometimes neither management or science.

The work of getting materials, machinery and human beings all co-operating in such a way as to get the desired results, is the management function; what the economists call the *entrepreneur* function. It requires knowledge not only of the business, but also of human beings. In the past, it was assumed that because a man could raise the money and acquire legal title to a business, therefore he was the most efficient in administering the property and managing the human beings to accomplish the purposes of the industry. Only yesterday I heard a gentleman in Philadelphia maintain that the present method of selecting managers,—the automatic method, by which the people that have the title to the property are the managers or choose the managers,—is the way to get the best managers.

When the scientific study of management was begun, however, it was found that that assumption was a very erroneous one; that what managers we had—our captains of industry, if you please—had overlooked almost universally the application of science,

of classified knowledge, to their problems. Not only that, but they used the military method of getting their results from the wage earners in the industry; they used the method of issuing orders which had to be obeyed regardless of whether the people thought they were reasonable or sensible or not.

When you scientific managers came along to bump your idea into the heads of these captains of industry, you know better than I what a job you had to get the idea over to them that they ought to apply science to industry. You did a big job. You showed them what, if they had really been competent, they ought themselves to have known and done, i. e., study their business as a science just the same as before a man becomes a chemist he is supposed to study chemistry.

But when you finally got the idea over to the managers of industry,—that methods of doing work, routing or storing materials, or shovelling coal, or whatever it is, can be done in a scientific manner, by using the knowledge of past performance and properly classifying and analyzing that knowledge,—you then brought industry face to face with a much more serious danger. These managers of industry, who are managers by virtue of the fact that they have legal title to the property, when they were convinced that they had not been scientific and suddenly they got science, they took the attitude: "Now we are sure we are right. And you workmen who say this is no good, you must be wrong. This is science that we offer you, not our own wishes. You must take it and you are unreasonable if you don't." It merely gave the manager who had the idea of the autocratic method of getting results, the idea that he must be right because the orders he is giving are based on science. And that is the problem that faces us today, a most serious problem.

The men in my experience in industry who have had the greatest amount of trouble with their employees, who have had the worst personal relations, have been the type of men who were sure that their policies were based on accurate scientific knowledge. They could prove it on paper by charts and figures and by every mathematical and scientific formula that was necessary. But they didn't know how to manage human beings and how human beings react to certain presentations of a subject. They had to get something over. Let us say they had to shoot a bullet and make an impression on somebody. When that bullet goes into a wooden head it makes one kind of

an impression. When that bullet goes into a steel armor-plate head it makes quite a different impression. The same bullet,—but different human beings and they get it differently.

There are all kinds of human beings, and they react to things differently. The manager who is not competent to see that the real problem of management, or the art of management, is primarily the method of putting psychology into practice, the manager who can't and doesn't see that is unfit to be a manager; and is the more dangerous if he has science to back him up.

Let me give you a few illustrations as to how workmen react to management. You must have in your minds many other similar experiences. You have found trouble in getting over new ideas to workmen and you say these workmen are opposed to improved methods and improved machinery. We have had in the clothing industry some trouble when new machines have had to be introduced, say pressing machines. Workmen are used to working with hand irons and when a machine is introduced they think it will take their jobs away and they kick. Employers want to insist on their rights of putting in new machinery, and they say the workmen who are opposed to new machinery are opposed to progress, and it looks as if they are right. But are they?

In Boston a short time ago an employer tried to put into his factory some hand irons. In that city they had been doing pressing with machines for several years, and one manufacturer wanted to go back to using hand irons. The pressers thereupon threatened to go out on strike. They might say: "We are striking because the employer is opposed to improved machinery and wants us to go back to the old and antiquated methods." If the workmen said that, they would be just about as right as employers are when they say that workmen or unions are opposed to the introduction of new machinery. The manager ought to know that every human being, no matter how radical he is, is instinctively afraid of change, suspicious of anything that is new. If you are used to eating prunes and oatmeal for breakfast, nobody that comes along with a new idea of breakfast food can get you to change without trouble. He has to spend millions of dollars to prove to you that grape nuts or corn flakes, or what not, has brain food in it; and then not all of you will change.

Now, then, if the management is really scientific,

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²Chairman Labor Adjustment Board, Rochester Clothing Industry, Rochester, N. Y.