

REVIEWS

How to Think in Business. By Matthew Thompson McClure, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1923, pp. x, 173.

The late Mr. DeBoer, president of the National Life Insurance Company, of Vermont, used to tell us that, when asked the best course of self training for business, he recommended a study of Mill's *Logic*. He held the conduct of business to consist of the solution of a sequence of problems and the best training for business to consist of training in logical thinking. The increasing emphasis on the problem and case methods of instruction in schools of business administration suggests that they too are coming to hold much the same point of view, but without recognition of the value of problem solving in the light of a comprehension of formulated principles and procedure of right thinking.

Professor McClure's book is well designed to give the reader who is unacquainted with philosophical literature a working knowledge of the principles and procedure of sound thinking. It is a small book—only some 40,000 words—but it is comprehensive; it is written in a simple, non-technical style which is easily understood, but it does not on that account forfeit substantiality of content. And to the reviewer its point of view is most acceptable, being that of John Dewey's *How We Think* and *Human Nature and Conduct*. It cannot fail to be very profitable reading not only to the young but to the mature man in business. It might well serve, in schools of business administration, as the text of a short introductory course to all courses involving the problem and case methods of instruction.

There is in this book much of pedagogic value to those concerned with teaching and with the development of a curriculum. If thinking be problem solving then should not all courses be problem or case courses and all the teaching in a course be by the problem or case method? But note what the author says: "Once the problem is properly placed in a fruitful context, it more or less solves itself. The really difficult thing is to know what contacts and analogies and principles to select as basal points of reference. . . . A good stock of major premises is necessary, a good stock of rules and principles acquired in previous experience; without some knowledge of a subject, you have only vague generalities to draw upon, and your reasoning process will be slow and probably lead only to indefinite conclusions. . . . A given problem is settled in the light of wider experience. From this it follows that deduction implies a previous stock and fund of information. Your previous experience is your capital. In solving problems you draw upon it. If you have no funds to draw upon, you will soon go into intellectual bankruptcy."

The last two words of the title of the book suggest an ingenuousness (apparently commercial) which is unpleasant. The principles and procedure of good thinking are the same wherever there is thinking—the same in business, in the hospital, in the pulpit, in the court room. There is no special method of thinking for business, as this book itself proves. The three or four illustrations drawn from the field of business are not sufficient to warrant the title as it stands. It is simply an excellent little book on how to think.

H. S. PERSON.

Applied Personnel Procedure. By Frank E. Weakley, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1923, pp. vii, 192.

Considered as an account of the actual personnel procedure in a particular plant, Mr. Weakley's book on "Applied Personnel Procedure" is a valuable contribution to personnel literature. It describes in concrete detail the organization, methods, practices and records of a personnel department, including such functions as selection, training, promotion and

welfare of the employees. General applied personnel procedure can only be worked out from the cumulative experiences of many plants which are willing to make public their methods and results.

The book, however, loses somewhat when it attempts to generalize largely from the experiences of one plant. In the present stage of experiment so many of the principles and practices of personnel work are still moot questions, that the successful application of certain forms of procedure in one plant does not necessarily mean that they are the most suitable to all others. An example is the much debated question as to who should have final authority in hiring. In assuming the practices in the one plant as standard, the book becomes less valuable to the novice in personnel work who may accept these generalizations as final. Similarly, the different degrees of emphasis which different plants place upon special functions, due to local conditions and interests, limits the experiences of one plant as an example for the general field. For example, employee representation, which is barely touched upon in this book, is an important function in some plants.

It would have been interesting if the author had pointed out how the personnel department had been successfully "sold" to the minor executives and department heads as well as the workers in this plant. It is a rock upon which many a well-planned personnel department with the best intentions has split and where guidance in the light of experience is much needed.

LOUISE C. ODENCRANTZ.¹

STANDARDIZATION IN GERMANY

(Continued from page 224)

case in this country. The largest of these firms devotes about half of its time to standardization work, employing a staff of over forty. They have as their clients trade associations as well as individual firms, the latter including both large and small companies.

One of their clients is the trade association representing the motor vehicle industry. In this work they perform many of the services that would be done by an ordinary headquarters standardization staff.

Of the companies which are their clients, some maintain their own standards bureaus, which take care of the greater part of the detailed work, leaving to the consulting firm only the more important and difficult questions. In other cases, the consulting firm does a large amount of the detailed work.

Another most interesting development is the work of consulting engineers on trade catalogs for companies. This is particularly significant, as it is carrying standardization a step farther than is usual, by introducing it into the sales organization and sales policy. In this, careful consideration is given to the question of limiting the number of types, ranges and sizes offered for sale, placing proper emphasis in the catalog on these particular items on which the company wishes to concentrate, and, in general, in featuring and often advertising the relation of the firm's products to the standardization movement.

¹ Labor Manager, Smith and Kaufman, Inc., New York City.

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(Extract from the Constitution)

The objects of this Society are, through research, discussion, publication and other appropriate means:

1. To secure an understanding and intelligent direction of the principles governing organized effort for the accomplishment of industrial and other social purposes for the common benefit of
 - A. The Community
 - B. Labor
 - C. The Manager
 - D. The Employer
2. To secure the gradual elimination of unnecessary effort and of unduly burdensome toil in the accomplishment of the work of the world.
3. To promote the scientific study and teaching of the principles governing organized effort, and of the mechanisms of their adaptation and application under varying and changing conditions.
4. To promote general recognition of the fact that the evaluation and application of these principles and mechanisms are the mutual concern of the community, labor, the manager and the employer.
5. To inspire in labor, manager and employer a constant adherence to the highest ethical conception of their individual and collective social responsibility.

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