

study is a study of behavior, of actual executive behavior, and they are living every day in the midst of such behavior. The essence of the behavior is that the assumption of final executive *technical* authority based on rank is an illusion; that such authority resides where the knowledge and the competent judgments are. We have underlined the word *technical* to distinguish the authority in Miss Follett's mind from legal or paper final authority.

OF THE papers presented at the December meeting those selected for publication in this issue were selected chiefly because they were most ready for the printer. The other papers will appear in the next issue. Mr. Bloomfield's address was presented at the meeting of teachers of management held under the auspices of the Taylor Society in conjunction with the meetings of the Taylor Society and of the Management Division of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. Its argument that the completely practical man is a man of scientific imagination and theories makes the address a logical introduction to the paper concerned with research. Mr. Person's paper is a layman's survey of research and research methods from the point of view of industry's interest, and a suggestion that industry should become more concerned with research. Miss Van Kleeck's paper is an argument for perfection of the interview as an essential method of investigation of some of the most vital problems of industry. Mr. Tweedy's paper describes a pioneer organization of manufacturers for joint research similar to well known organizations which are performing that function for merchandising.

#### Annual Business Meeting

THE annual business meeting of the Taylor Society Incorporated was held at 4 P. M., December 9, 1926, in Room 611, Engineering Societies Building, 29 W. Thirty-ninth Street, New York, N.Y.

The meeting was called to order by Percy S. Brown, president, the presence of a quorum determined, and the notice of the meeting read.

The Managing Director thereupon made a brief report concerning the incorporation of the Taylor Society, a voluntary association, as The Taylor Society Incorporated. Incorporation of The Taylor Society Incorporated had been authorized by the members of

the Taylor Society at a special meeting held April 26, 1926, and articles of incorporation had been filed in the office of the Secretary of State of the State of New York on July 13, 1926.

The meeting then proceeded to adopt By-laws of The Taylor Society Incorporated. The By-laws adopted are essentially the same as the Constitution of the former Taylor Society, unincorporated. The By-laws are being printed and will be sent to each member.

The meeting then proceeded to elect officers in accordance with the By-laws which had been adopted. The balloting resulted as follows:

President and Director, to serve one year.	Morris, L. Cooke
Vice-President and Director, to serve two years.	C. L. Barnum
*Vice-President and Director, to serve one year.	Howard Coonley
Treasurer and Director, to serve one year.	Edward Clark, 3d.
Director, to serve two years.	A. B. Rich
Director, to serve two years.	N. G. Burleigh
Director, to serve two years.	Harlow S. Person
*Director, to serve one year.	Lillian M. Gilbreth
*Director, to serve one year.	H. K. Hathaway

(The officers identified by an asterisk were formally elected by The Taylor Society Incorporated, to complete the two year terms for which they had been elected by The Taylor Society, unincorporated, at the annual meeting held December 4, 1925.)

The reports of the Treasurer, the Finance Planning Committee and the Committee on Honorary Members and Fellows were then received, accepted and placed on file. The report of the Treasurer will be printed and sent to members.

A Nominating Committee was then elected as follows: John Williams (New York—Chairman), Mary Van Kleeck (New York), Robert Anderson (Auburn, N. Y.), A. L. Kress (Williamsport, Pa.), Philip F. Moen (Providence).

## The Illusion of Final Authority<sup>1</sup>

Authority Must Be Functional and Functional Authority Carries with It Functional Responsibility

By MARY P. FOLLETT  
Author of "Creative Experience"

WHEN writers on business management speak of "ultimate authority," and "supreme control" as two of the functions of administration, I think that expressions are being used which are a survival of former days. These expressions do not seem to me to describe business as conducted today in many plants. Business practice has gone ahead of business theory. So much goes to contribute to executive decisions before the part which the executive head takes in them, which is indeed sometimes merely the official promulgation of a decision, that the conception of final authority is losing its force in the present organization of business. This is as true of other executives as of the head. Here, too, final decisions have the form and the force which they have accumulated. I have seen an executive feel a little self-important over a decision he had made, when that decision had really come to him ready made. An executive decision is a moment in a process. The *growth* of a decision, the *accumulation* of authority, not the final step, is what we need most to study.

The most fundamental idea in business today, that which is permeating our whole thinking on business organization, is that of function. Every man performs a function or part of a function. Research and scientific study determine function in scientifically managed plants. I think a man should have just as much, no more and no less, authority as goes with his function or his task. People talk about the *limit of authority* when it would be better to speak of the *definition of task*.

If, then, authority is derived from function, it has little to do with hierarchy of position as such, and in scientifically managed shops this is more and more recognized. We find authority with the head of a department, with an expert, with the

<sup>1</sup>Paper presented at a meeting of the Taylor Society, New York, December 10, 1926.

driver of a truck as he decides on the order of deliveries. The despatch clerk has more authority in despatching work than the president. I know a man in a factory who is superintendent of a department which includes a number of sub-departments. He tells me that in many cases he says to the head of a sub-department, that is, to a man in a subordinate position to his, "With your permission, I do so and so." This is a decided reversal of the usual method, is it not? In the old hierarchy of position the head of the sub-department would be "under" the superintendent of the department; the "lower" would take orders from the "higher." But my friend recognizes that authority should go with knowledge and experience, that that is where obedience is due, no matter whether it is up the line or down the line. Where knowledge and experience are located, there, he says, you have the key man of the situation. If this has begun to be recognized in business practice, we have here the forerunner of some pretty drastic changes in our thinking on business management.

A moment ago I used the word "under." Perhaps it may seem advisable sometime to get rid of the words "over" and "under." I know a chief executive who says he does not know whether he is at the head or at the bottom, and he wishes there was some way of making out a chart that did not put the president at the top. I was interested last summer in England, in meeting the head of a large business, to find that one of the chief difficulties in his thinking was concerned with this question. He said he didn't like all this matter of some being "over" others, yet he knew it was necessary—as we all do. What is the way out of this dilemma?

Two years ago my nurse in the hospital said to me, "Did you notice that operating nurse? Didn't she look black? I wonder what has hap-