

DISCIPLINE ON THE BORDER<sup>1</sup>

A HINT TO MANAGEMENT

By PAUL B. VALLE<sup>2</sup>

It is not my intention in this paper to comment upon the weight that the mobilization of the militia threw upon the scales of our relations with Mexico. We are nearly as much in the dark now in that matter as we were four months ago. But we do know something more about ourselves as a Nation, and we have begun to realize some of our shortcomings.

The President's call last June brought to the Border many thousand men comprising the militia, supposed to be our second line of defense. We had been at the border but a few hours when we realized our helplessness to defend anything—even ourselves. As one of the regular Army Officers stated, on viewing our gyrations at the drill ground, we were a howling mob; we were half of us half trained, we were half of us unembarrassed by any training whatsoever. We were in our woolen uniforms in the hottest of Arizona weather, some of our rifles could shoot straight, some could shoot around a corner, some could shoot from both ends, and some could not shoot at all. We were in a strange country and a strange climate, living a new life, and personal hygiene was sketchy to say the least. Men who had worked indoors in factories, at desks, in school rooms, were handed picks and told to dig. One's superior officer was perhaps one of the underlings in one's office or factory. But he did not behave toward us as such. Our mental equilibrium was destroyed.

And so they set to work to make soldiers of us. It was a matter of routine to supply new equipment, but it was a long time coming; it was over a month before we were issued summer clothing and new rifles. And it was a matter of patience to teach us drill and a matter of perseverance and tact to teach us personal hygiene. I distinctly remember one incident in regard to the latter. Two of our five senses told us that one of the men was in dire need of a bath. We modestly hinted, patiently argued, and boldly ordered him to remedy his shortcoming, but in vain. Finally, we gave him a bath. He was quite ill for several days. (We could never be certain how things were going to affect people down there.) But near the end of our service, this same man was the loudest in his grumbling if our march happened to take us to some spot in the desert where there was enough water for drinking purposes only.

But the greatest task of all was the teaching of discipline. Introducing Scientific Management into an old-time shop of the traditional type is a sum-

<sup>1</sup>A paper read at the annual meeting of the Taylor Society, New York City, December 9, 1916.

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mer afternoon's pastime compared with this. It is my belief that in this most vital thing the greatest mistake of our training was made and I am writing this paper because I think that we, in management, can profit by this mistake. If there is any one thing that we young men in this country, and especially in industry, need, it is discipline, and discipline of the right sort.

I think that it has been a tendency with most of us in reorganizing a shop to try to maintain discipline by rule-of-thumb methods, all the while we are berating rule-of-thumbism in the technique of the management. Discipline on the border was of course, as has always been deemed necessary in military organizations, most obdurately rule of thumb.

I said a right sort of discipline. I do not mean a less stern discipline, one that could not duplicate a Charge of the Light Brigade, for it must be that kind if we are face to face with war—even an industrial war. But I mean a discipline taught in a new way, arising in a fundamental basic belief that an order must be obeyed because there is a reason behind it, not because it is an order. It cannot any longer mean the blind unreasoning obedience of before. We have been educated in this country individualistically, each for himself as a detached unit, we have been taught that we must create our own destiny—not with a thought of cohesiveness, of our relation to the rest of the community, the Nation, or mankind, but, we must confess, with the idea of self and the work for self predominant. If our ideals are high ideals good reflects to the community, if our ideals are lower, the community suffers. We like to think of ourselves as a law unto ourselves, and not as a tiny expression of a composite whole. And when a crisis comes, as it did last June, when we *must* learn, it was "hard to kick against the pricks" of this same education.

This is how they went about it. We were given picks and shovels and ordered to dig roads and ditches, and bury dead horses and mules and garbage. We dug holes and filled them up again. "Why?" we would ask. "Those are the orders," would be the reply. They would order us to put up a tent and after that had been done with much pain and labor, they would order us to take it down again and put it up again a few inches to the right or left. "Why?" we would ask. "Those are the orders." We were told that during our free hours we could not leave camp without passes, which we could get, say, once a week. "Why?" we would ask, very indignantly, for wasn't our time off duty our own to do with as we pleased? "Those are the orders," said the sphinx.

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We were taken on long marches and at the end of a hot dusty day, we would see water—the first water in fifteen or twenty miles perhaps. With our canteens dry and licking our lips in anticipation we would increase our pace, when a fateful voice would be heard, "you men keep back from that water, and let the mules and officers drink." "Why?"—"Orders." All these things and many more we were made to do.

We soon stopped asking why because we knew the answer by heart. When that stage of the game was reached it began to be demoralizing. And also a strange viewpoint was taken of the matter by the rank and file of the enlisted men—and I tell you managers and managers of managers that the men in some of your shops where you are introducing the Taylor System have that same viewpoint today: *that the officers themselves didn't know why.*

Then one fine day a certain Lieutenant-Colonel of the 12th U. S. Infantry came ostensibly to teach us guerilla warfare. He formed the regiment into a hollow square and gave us a talk. And he told us why. He told us that we were made to dig ditches and bury garbage and furl our tents every day and bathe periodically in order that we might, if the time came for war, know how to keep away disease. We had been drilled and marched and counter-marched by the hour and day and week, so that when an order came in battle we would execute it automatically. We had been sent on long trying hikes to harden us for campaigning. And he told us the reason for all these big and little tasks that we had done and when he had finished we cheered him (although it wasn't good discipline to cheer while standing at attention).

CONTROL AND CONSENT<sup>1</sup>

A DISCUSSION OF INSTRUCTIONS, INITIATIVE, AND INDIVIDUALISM IN INDUSTRY.

PRESIDENT PERSON: According to the program which inspired you to come to this session, I should now present to you Morris L. Cooke<sup>2</sup>; who would initiate discussion of the relations between management and labor by consideration of the specific topic "Who is Boss in your Shop." Mr. Cooke's unfortunate illness has not merely prevented his presence with us this evening; it has prevented the completion of his paper to a degree which would warrant him in sending advance copies to those who were elected to discuss it. Therefore you must understand clearly that discussion this evening is not a discussion of Mr. Cooke's paper. We do not know what his paper would have told us.

<sup>1</sup>Discussion at the annual meeting of the Taylor Society, at the Hofbrau House, New York City, Saturday evening, December 9, 1916.

<sup>2</sup>Consulting Engineer, Philadelphia.

And from that day on the morale of the regiment was bettered a hundred percent.

Now the point of all is contained in the fervent remark of one of the men after that talk—"Why in hell didn't they tell us that before?" I am willing to wager that if you take the trouble to explain the reason for some of the moves in this Scientific Management game to the men in your factories you will hear the same remark made with just as much fervor. I realize that it is ever becoming the tendency to let the men understand thoroughly what is being done, but the mistake we all of us are making is that we do this too late in the game. Our clubs and classes in Scientific Management among the workers in our factories, are started after, not before we have made the biggest steps in the work.

Those explanations, that instruction, should be first, and when the men see that there is a good reason behind every move, they will soon stop asking why, not because they get a rule-of-thumb answer, but because they have learned to believe that the "boss" really knows what he is doing after all.

The discipline obtained under the old method in shop will be no better than the discipline of the militia of today, when even after four months of rigid instruction, orders concerning little and big things are being continually disobeyed. Perhaps if we should have a year more in the service we would obey any order just because it was an order, and the same applies to any industrial establishment, but it is without doubt fairer, quicker, better "going" when we take the horse from behind the cart and put him in the shafts.

One of the gentlemen who was elected to discuss Mr. Cooke's paper, not having seen Mr. Cooke's paper, prepared independently an outline of his own views on the subject. Fortunately or, unfortunately for him, but certainly fortunately for us, I became aware of the outline in his pocket. As a penalty for such preparedness I have advised him that I should call upon him first and asked him so far as possible to convert what was to have been merely a discussion into a leading paper. I give you Robert B. Wolf.

Mr. ROBERT B. WOLF: I cannot say that I am not prepared after what Mr. Person has just told you. I had hoped to discuss Mr. Cooke's paper and I regret extremely that his unfortunate illness has prevented his being here. I rejoice, however, with the

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