

THE PROGRESSIVE RELATION BETWEEN EFFICIENCY AND CONSENT¹

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Definition of Scientific Management.

1. By scientific management I mean those principles of business conduct which are both explicit and implicit in the life and work and writings of Frederick W. Taylor.
2. I mean those principles considered in their purity as principles and considered apart from the particular and local applications of them made by Mr. Taylor.
3. I mean those principles considered as principles very grossly stated by him and as to statement still in their youth, so to speak.
4. I mean those principles considered as one root of economic life, and to that extent thoroughly sound, but still showing clearly in their present statement that they have not been worked into thorough co-ordination with other equally vital principles of the economic and social world.
5. By scientific management I mean further the attempts to apply the principles as stated by Mr. Taylor as they are applied, for example, in the Tabor Mfg. Company of Philadelphia, the Plimpton Press of Norwood, Mass., and the Link Belt Company of Philadelphia.

And the actual methods of applying the principles at those plants I regard as only indicative of what the *real application* of the principles as laid down by Mr. Taylor would be. They are sufficiently indicative, however, to furnish the materials for a sketch of an ideal shop run according to the Taylor principles. They further furnish us, I believe, with the basis for the belief that the principles stated by Mr. Taylor, in so far as they are fully applied, furnish the latest word in the progress of the mechanics of industry. For simplicity in this paper, we shall deal with these principles only from the point of view of the mechanics of production.

I am not forgetful of two important facts in connection with Mr. Taylor's life:

1. That many of the impressions he conveyed in describing his ideas did his ideas themselves and his real spirit great injustice.
2. That his own conception of much that is contained in his writings is in many cases fragmentary and apparently short-sighted.

It is, nevertheless, my belief that when the fullest allowance is made for these two facts, Mr. Taylor's contributions to the industrial world will gradually prove themselves to be among the major contributions to human progress. The human limitations of Mr. Taylor's thinking and methods of expression and the crudities of the application of his principles in practice at the present day will weigh little as compared with the revolutionary effects his conceptions will have on the progress of the world when they are thoroughly understood and freed from the short vision and from the ignorant, the merely imitative, or the slyster practitioner.

It should also be noted at this point that much which is being done under the name of scientific management and much of the criticism of scientific management is only serving to give undue importance to the work of the efficiency charlatan, to the loose social thinker, and to the attitude of the half-informed public, all of which obscures the real issue. The useful thing to do is for all persons honestly interested in the subject to simplify the problem

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and to try to solve it in its purity apart from considerations which are not of its essence. It is precisely this which both the most earnest advocates of Mr. Taylor's principles and the most earnest advocates of labor had failed to do up to the time of Professor Hoxie's work. If Professor Hoxie can complete his work through digesting the materials he has gathered, and also through making an investigation of labor in its relation to scientific management as he has made of scientific management in its relation to labor, we shall begin to be in a position where we can get at the question of scientific management in a truly scientific fashion.

Our Problem Today.

Our immediate task together is to see whether we can begin at the present time to get a line on that genuine application of the principles of scientific management which is beneficial to society as against that alleged application which is dangerous to society. I shall try today merely to lay the grounds for the discussion of what I believe to be one basic standard of judgment. If we try to state the problem clearly, I believe that we shall be able to formulate this standard. The standard by which to judge is to ascertain whether any particular application of the principles involves the recognition of a truly independent and organized consent on the part of the workers.

By my statement of the problem I shall endeavor to show that the standard as above stated is a primary standard by which to judge all management.

The Efficient Shop.

Let us begin by getting clearly in our minds a picture of an efficient shop as we can easily construct it out of the principles laid down by Mr. Taylor and even out of the present attempts to apply those principles.

I shall picture this shop only in outline because you are all familiar with the details of the picture. I simply want to be sure that we do not lose the proportions of the main outlines in the particular interest which any one of us may have in certain particular aspects of the picture. In my description of this shop I shall, for the moment, ignore the human element entirely as it actually exists in the shop and describe the people handling the operations of which I shall speak as people who, whatever they may be outside the factory, are while in the factory simply animate machines, people who have either been trained or trained themselves, it matters not which for our present purpose, to do their work with all the precision of the most marvellous engine and with all the automatic delicacy and grace and perfect adaptation to environment of the poised bird on the wing.

In such a shop first of all we should find Mr. Taylor's principles applied to the financial and sales end of the organization. These applications I shall not pause to consider here (because, for simplicity's sake, we shall deal only with the strictly production problem) further than to point out that in any really efficient organization the high spots all along the line must be secured as to their efficiency before the more minute details are highly developed. A great deal of the scientific management in use at the present day, whether in sales, finance, production, or personnel, is similar to the situation in which a great deal of money might be spent in curing a person of flat foot who had some disease of the knee which might lead to amputation. This lack of co-ordination is an excellent illustration of one of the basic inefficiencies which penetrates the whole world today.

Assume, however, that the ideal shop we are picturing to ourselves has avoided these insults to common sense. It