PERSONNEL AFFAIRS

PART I

BY

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This paper was written, in its original form, for a lecture, in May, 1956, *and was later revised for publication in the* Journal. *It is nevertheless, in a material sense, already 'dated' because events are moving very rapidly in the field it covers. Though these events could and may affect the material statements, the approach and underlying philosophical argument remains unaffected.*

'It is not things, but the opinions about the things, that trouble mankind'.
—EPICTETUS, *Encheiridion*, V.

INTRODUCTION

The views here expressed are purely personal and have been acquired through a good many years of service in the Navy, particularly perhaps during three most formative years in the Personnel Section of the Engineer-in-Chief's Department. The approach is somewhat philosophic because it seems appropriate to a subject permeated with social and economic change and development. It is necessary, before one comes to consider naval personnel, to perceive Man in his context of Society, his rights and obligations and the changing social pattern of our time.

The Observer's Point of View

Personnel affairs in general become personal in particular. We are, therefore, concerned with individuals and human beings whose values are infinite, whereas those of material are finite. Men possess spirits and wills of their own and are unpredictable, in their behaviour, by any absolute laws. Non-human problems are subject to laws which can be proved or refuted ; there is no free will or 'ought' in such problems. Thus, in contradiction to human affairs, non-human

problems can be resolved to orderly solutions by logical analysis and the application of method and law. Human affairs, however, depend upon experience and can only be empirical. Logic is not necessarily applicable and statistics can be misleading or dangerous.

The best that can be done is the formulation of an ' interim opinion ' on the facts known at the moment of decision. In this context it is essential to consider history as 'opinion', which may be weighted according to the point of view of the observer.

It is evident, therefore, that the point of view of the observer becomes of vital import in any human problem. To establish it, the ancient Greeks first said, ' Know thyself ' and then proceeded to do so by answering certain questions in order to try and calibrate personal views and prejudice.

The establishment, and holding, of any balance is here considered to depend fundamentally upon faith—of some sort, in something of endurance over and above the normal dimensions of human life. The anchorage of this faith, or its nature, is outside the scope of this paper, but it is necessary to observe that the holding of any faith implies a degree of submission.

Reference Frames

Having established the observer's point of view, it is necessary to select a reference frame in which to set personnel affairs. These can be large or small, e.g. Branch, Naval, Services, National, etc. The picture to be studied in whatever frame chosen, however, is Man and the frame itself is Society. The reference frame chosen here is National for most purposes and the whole, picture and frame, is considered to be Man in Society or, in the broad sense, Politics ; but it is necessary to forget the more usual application of this word, i.e. Party-politics.

As an example of a reference frame (or focus), the disappearance of coloured stripes radically altered the focus of naval officers' political thought overnight : the shift here was from Branch to Naval. This change being in the nature of a considerable sociological experiment, it may be that some of those affected will never adapt themselves to the new reference frame, which involves adopting a new and bigger reference group and group loyalty.

Any shift of reference group requires an open mind if it is to be effected happily and without personal or group disturbance. Some psychologists hold that all minds are closed after the age of forty, by which they mean that all minds after forty are activated by prejudice and emotion, particularly on problems of self-involvement. In this sense, therefore, such matters as the ' wet ' and ' dry ' lists and A.F.O.1/56 are acute problems of bias and prejudice and, being things of the mind and spirit, introduce psychological and sociological effects.

The Navy has begun to try out psychology, very gingerly, and is still somewhat unsure and distrustful of it (it would appear). Its use is, as yet, confined to that of a specialized tool operated by specialists and these, as all specialists, tend to be suspect and unwelcome to any non-specialist administration.

Sociology, which studies men in groups (whereas psychology studies the individual) has not yet been used in the Navy, so far as is known to the writer. However one may feel, personally, about these ' -ologies ' they are specialist tools for (perhaps because of) our highly complex western technological civilization and unless, or until, the Services can equip their own leaders to use them naturally as part of the modern concept of leadership, it will be necessary to rely upon specialists.

History and Prophecy

As previously observed, all history is opinion and it is hard enough to prove some of the ' facts ' of history. The danger of using history as a form of prophecy should therefore be appreciated. Without explicitly adopting this as a ' method ' it is easy to fall into it, e.g. by thinking or saying ' we are short of stokers ; we must have more stokers '. This begs the real questions as to what stokers are and do ; whether in fact they are appropriate to the task or the times ; whether changes of title, job, conditions, etc., are involved or not.

There are frequent examples of this historicism in all politics, not least in naval personnel affairs ; but this is not to decry or belittle the value of particular studies of history, e.g. of a Branch or Trade, without which it is impossible to assess or appreciate trends of development. On the contrary, it is one of the gravest handicaps under which any personnel section can suffer, to be inadequately equipped with history or the means of making research and maintaining records. History, in the sense of records, is integral with the study of personnel problems.

Ship and State

Considering personnel affairs as politics, the familiar phrase ' the ship of state ' can be transposed to ' the ship, a state ' for naval personnel affairs ; the ship is a complete form of society ' writ small '. In its peculiar circumstances it is, nevertheless, an ultimate expression of man in society. The naval society, however, is bound up with, and depends upon, the national society ; it is a particular expression of that society with its particular purpose. The Navy, in this light, is not an end in itself but a means to a national end, and the personnel of the naval society still retain national citizenship as a common right and responsibility, with other members of the national society.

Ends and Means : Individual and Society

Reiterating that personnel affairs are made up from individuals, and taking individuals as the common denominator of society, whether national or naval, it is necessary to be clear that the individual does not exist because of the state or society. The individual is an end in himself and not a means to an end. This, of course, is open to disagreement : it is upon the interpretation of this relationship that the fundamental split in ideology occurs between perverted idealist thought and Western democratic thought, and between mechanistic/materialist concepts of man and the truly humanistic values of men. There is, in all concepts of society, a danger of misinterpretation.

Accepting the Western value, it is fundamental that the individual does not exist because of the Navy. Ideally, the Navy exists, in this interpretation, because citizens enter it voluntarily in order to serve their country. The ' pressed man ', whether pressed physically or economically, does not satisfy this relationship or value and makes the form of any national service important for consideration in this respect. It is interesting to compare the numbers of unemployed in the inter-war years with the totals of those now in the National Service and at school due to the higher school-leaving age.

It is evident that this ideal condition of manning envisages a two-way obligation between the Service and the individual : the Navy needs volunteers for long service but, in accepting them, accepts an obligation towards them as individuals and as citizens. In this paper it is held to be of first importance that this implicit two-way obligation be kept clearly in mind, whether or not it is admitted factually in a form of contract.

Education : State and Individual

Following up the relationship of the individual to the state or society, it i of special importance to consider this in the matter of education and training a common factor between the Navy and the Nation. Before the Educatio Act of 1944, which was agreed by all political parties, education in the Unite Kingdom was allowed to percolate downward from above, first by the Church then by the State, and was strictly utilitarian in its general purpose. Thos who could not afford to purchase education were given sufficient to perform a job as assessed by ' Higher Authority '. Historically, it does not seem to hav been accidental that educational expansion of the technical type (mechanic institutes, adult schools, people's colleges, etc.) came into being as a result o the Great Exhibition of 1851, which revealed a great need to improve Britis labour technically to compete more effectively in world markets.

It can be said that the 1944 Education Act effected a revolution in thi country which had occurred in 1776 in the United States of America and i 1789 in France—both stemming from the philosophical works of such men a J. J. Rousseau, Tom Paine, Condorcet. Not only was ' equal opportunity fo all ' in education established by the Act but, more significant and important all individuals were given the right to education ' appropriate to their needs ' ' to develop their various aptitudes and capacities ' and to be prepared for ' th responsibilities of citizenship '. The Act also established that this educatio is to be provided by all authorities, as a duty, ' so far as their powers extend to contribute towards the spiritual, moral, mental, and physical developmen of the community by securing that efficient education shall be available to mee the needs of the population of their area '.

It is important to appreciate the four elements of education and the order o precedence given : this is education of the ' whole man ' and is centred officially and for the first time, upon the individual, not upon the State, depart ment, inspector or teacher. This is the essence of the revolution begun in 194 and through which we are now living.

The Citizen and the Services

A leading article in the *Daily Telegraph* emphasizes this revolution in though which arises from the new value given to the individual explicitly. Referring t the Army Act it said, ' the purpose of the Army Act is not merely to regulat pay and discipline but to apply, so far as possible, the same standards of con duct, corporate and individual, which Parliament might by enactment seek t encourage in civil life at home '. Against this background the appointment o the committee to investigate ' bull ' in the Army, under Sir John Wolfenden Vice-Chancellor of Reading University, assumes a rather different aspect tha might appear at first glance. As an educationist, it is fair to anticipate that Si John will have some unusual views to express and the recommendations of th committee could have far-reaching results, not only in the Army.

The Naval Discipline Act awaits attention, but the principle of the *Dail Telegraph's* leader can be said to apply to all Services—whether manned volun tarily or by National Servicemen.

' Bouleversement '

The effect of the 1944 Education Act is held, therefore, to be one of standin previous thought about education in this country literally on its head. Th results of this fundamental *bouleversement* are only beginning to be felt, t spread and to be appreciated. The results and implications of a topsy-turv

social and educational reformation are the very stuff of personnel affairs and line up with the economic pressures resulting from a condition of overall man-power shortage in a civilization committed to technology.

Economics and Technology : Man-power

In the sphere of economics the same difficulties exist for thought, policy and action as in the educational and other social spheres of human affairs : laws are not absolute, are open to misinterpretation, and are subject to the same historicist dangers. If the Education Act of 1944 is taken as the social mainspring of the social revolution, with its new emphasis upon the individual, the economic mainspring is the policy of full employment. Indeed, this is the point of common contact, for it is clearly unacceptable to regard any individual as contributing towards the ' spiritual, moral, mental, or physical development of the community ' unless he is in some way ' employed '.

But there is another vitally important economic aspect. If the civilization adopted by the community is such that its continuation, let alone its expansion and refinement, is dependent upon a technological machine culture, then the employment of that community must be such as to ensure this condition. To appreciate this aspect involves highly speculative considerations of world resources of fuels, food, population, raw materials, etc., and at least an inspired guess at the probable rate of development of parts of the world at present undeveloped by Western standards. For the purposes of this paper the opinions of a geo-chemist, Harrison Brown, are given as expressed in his book *The Challenge of Man's Future.* ' It must be emphasized, however, that industrial civilization can come to an end even in the absence of a major catastrophe (another world war). Continuance of vigorous machine culture beyond another century or so is clearly dependent upon the development and utilization of atomic and solar power. If these sources of newly applied energy are to be available in time, the basic research and development must be pursued actively in the coming decades. And even if the knowledge is available soon enough, it is quite possible that the political and economic situation in the world, at the time the new transition becomes necessary, will be of such a nature that the transition will be effectively hindered. Time and again we have seen advance halted by unfavourable economic and political conditions. This, I believe, depends largely upon education of the young and the adult '.

This appreciation is based upon an assessment of geo-physical conditions which accords between 75 and 200 years ' life ' to the present known stocks of fossil fuels—a ' life ' which has more recently been reduced, by some authorities, to a mere 50 years. The Suez crisis has done a little to give point to such an appreciation in its practical implications for an island population of more than double that which natural resources could feed, but which is becoming accustomed to cars, refrigerators and television as their ' way of life '.

Harrison Brown brings his challenge down to education and here at once the social, economic and political fields merge. It is at this focal point in education that the international, and especially the East-West, clash occurs. Recent national realization of the scope and quality of the Russian technological effort in education and training has badly shaken this country not only for prestige reasons, but also because it is at long last being grasped that the measure of such education does directly govern the national ability to survive as a part of the Western technological civilization, as some degree of international power—or just to survive at all. For it is assumed, here, that there can be no putting back the clock to a comfortable mediæval conception of existence ; the choice is between barbaric, non-social, food-gathering conditions in a worked-out world, or technological progress. Perhaps some correction should be applied here for pessimism !

Naval and National Needs : Manning Policy

Having established that the politico-economic needs both demand the individual and his capabilities to be the focal point, it follows that naval manning policy must be framed so that the individual is the most precious national raw material and must be used to the best possible national and individual advantage. Old ideas which might be expressed as ' Get me some men to man this ship ' become replaced by ' How many men can I afford to man this design ? Is this the most effective design for using those men ? ' The effect of such thinking on complementing and design policy has yet to be seen.

Institutional and Functional Organization

It is traditional to start any detailed consideration of Service personnel matters with officers.

To say that there has always been a Navy, therefore there will always be naval officers, therefore they will be of such and such a type, is all historicist, unsound reasoning and is being challenged by the upside-down thought developed above. If one thinks again, the Navy exists because the Nation has a task to be done at sea. Because there are men, there must be leaders ; these leaders are the officers, but it is worth remembering that any group of men will throw up its own leaders if left to itself.

This type of thought, which is submitted as more logical and scientific than the ' institutional ', is referred to here as ' functional ' because it stems from the job to be done, growing through the individual to the group and, ultimately to the organization. There is the usual weakness, for it can be perverted as easily to make the individual a mere tool as any ' institutional ' system.

Men and Material

The relation of men to material in the functional organization postulated is, clearly, that men must possess the most effective material means for their task. The ideal policy is that the most effective service is that which possesses the least number of effective men equipped with the maximum effective material means for the task defined. The ideal can never be realized and therefore the policy resolves to the balancing of ends and means, men and material, in the best form or compromise that can be effected.

OFFICERS

Proceeding institutionally, in this context, the Navy began to review its officer training and career structure before considering its ratings or enunciating any clear-cut material policy. Whether this was purposeful or by expedient it was, in any case, to think institutionally and traditionally. Some critics might call it ' cart before horse '.

An examination of the facts, as exposed by the Montagu Report and the reasons for this Committee, makes it clear that expediency was the true cause. The Navy was so badly placed for quality and quantity of officer-entry candidates that something drastic had to be done ; reform could no longer be resisted, especially regarding the career prospects of technical officers, for whom recruiting was glaringly inadequate in quality and quantity.

Montagu Report

It is interesting to note that the Montagu Report advocated, by the majority opinion, a 13-year old, a 16-year old, and an 18-year old entry in the proportions of 25 : 25 : 50 per cent. A minority report of one proposed an all 18-year

old entry. For parliamentary political reasons the 13-year old entry was untenable, the 16-year old was not altogether satisfactory as it took many boys away from school too early—and thus the minority opinion, all 18-year old entry, was adopted. As to which was, or is, the best form of entry for the purpose, educationally, is a very open question. This subject, and its treatment, illustrates the extreme difficulty of dealing with educational subjects *qua* educational and distinct from party politics : education is politics in this sense. The thought arises whether an 11-year old entry would have been so contentious as a 13-year old !

Mansergh Committee

After the Montagu Report came the Committee on Officers' Career Structure and Training, called the Mansergh Committee or ' C.O.S.T.' The final results of this committee are now well known through A.F.O.1/56 and the very good lectures and talks organized by the Second Sea Lord and D.C.N.P.(O) ; but the background of months of intense investigation, discussion and deliberation called for clear and objective thinking and an ability to perceive principles which taxed all Branches and the integrity of many officers.

It is in such circumstances as these that the need for faith becomes very real ; in this case there is no doubt that the personal faith of the Engineer-in-Chief of the Fleet in the justice of his views had a strong influence on the final outcome. Holding fast to faith in the Navy and with ' We are of one company ' as his motto, his influence extended well beyond the Branch, and the spirit of ' C.O.S.T. ' as finally resolved, owes much to his influence and belief in a big cause.

Transition Stage

But if faith was essential during this formative period, it is no less necessary in the future, especially during the transition stage, when A.F.O.1/56 is being practically interpreted. During this period clear thinking, open-mindedness, and faith in the outcome of large issues for the good of the Navy will be just as important as in the years immediately past. Indeed, it will be even more important because the interpretation is bound to show itself slowly and, to the eager critic, probably imperfectly. The ultimate success of the General List conception will depend upon how this transitional period is accepted and tackled by those it most affects—which, in general, will mean the middle and junior ranges of officers, commanders and below.

Likely Future Problems

Of the difficulties likely to arise the most obvious are, firstly, the ' design function ' in the future which proved too tough a nut to be cracked by the Mansergh Committee, was considered by the Reid Committee and has been passed to the Nihill Committee; secondly, the balance between upper deck and professional requirements and, thirdly, the question of sub-specialization in the future.

The Professional Man and the Administrator or Executive

This division is really at the root, not only of the naval relationships but of the national relationships of ' science ' to ' the arts '. Mixed up in it are questions of status, of responsibility without adequate authority, authority without a real responsibility, education, and what proper balance should be

struck in it for the technological world today, and the complicated subject of professional ethics, or the relationship between consultant and customer or patient.

Fundamentally it is a question of power. In the education of leaders, pressures are already beginning to force a further recognition of science and technology against the traditional and institutional preference for the arts, science hitherto having been regarded as purely vocational. This, essentially, is the revolution of ' institution ' versus ' function ' and the right solution would seem to be that which produces the best balance of both within a reference frame of Man in Society for the new education for leadership (Secondary and University) : science unrelated to humanity could be worse than the humanities contemptuous or ignorant of science.

Specialization

Deeper implications are specialization versus basic education, and the growing danger that management and above all, man-management, will come to be regarded as a specialization sufficiently divorced from professional (or technical) qualities to allow it, once again, to become the preserve of an intellectual *élite* possessed of theory and insufficient, if any, practice. The mad rush after management courses and diplomas shows only too clearly how easily a reasonable need can become perverted and turned into a ' thing ' in its own right All the courses and diplomas in the world will not of themselves make any man necessarily better as a manager in practice—similarly with leadership. If power be at the bottom of most human relations, together with resentment and suspicion, then the only satisfactory, practical course is to pay much attention to the definitions of responsibility, the means of carrying out these responsibilities, and the status of all concerned so that checks and balances are as effective as possible.

Naval Educational Balance

This is a narrowed application of the broad problem discussed above and fines down to the basic points of common entry to the Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, and identical training for all in Phases I and II (i.e. before specialization) and as nearly identical training in Phase III as possible.

Only these two non-Branch fundamentals can build up a solid General List—but they have already had to be fought for and the battle will go on unceasingly as those who do not believe in ' one company ' seek opportunity to drive in wedges and force the specialists back into deeper and more distinct grooves. This can recur through lack of equitable distribution of quality between Branches or by the form of educational syllabuses. Much time and thought went into the formulation of agreed syllabuses for Phase III, and it was a matter of great difficulty to reconcile the ' Identical-with-X ' ideal and the Manadon entry standard (bearing in mind the broad type of entry to B.R.N.C. under the new 18-year old rules). It may be said that the ' X ' receives insufficient engineering training and that there is too much ' one way traffic ' about the new scheme. Only time and experience can show whether this is true, but there is at least a good deal more engineering about the whole scheme for ' X 's than in the original plan, throughout which the word ' engineering ' was conspicuous by its absence. There is no reason, however, why the future balance of ' X ' training should not be further adjusted if the matter is fairly presented and judged objectively in the light of G.L. evolution in the meantime.

For those who look askance at the new sequence of training for engineering specialists, with its inversion of sea (practical) and shore (theoretical) elements,

it is worth mentioning that this was the intention of the Ford Report (1944) which Admiral Ford, as Engineer-in-Chief of the Fleet, only had time to begin himself. The whole new scheme, so far as engineering is concerned, is best regarded as a form of what Industry now calls ' the thick sandwich ' type of course.

Branch selection, the other arch brick for General List structure, will need very careful watching, but experience with artificer apprentices has shown that a reasonable and generally equitable scheme can be worked with about 85 per cent satisfaction of choice for individuals.

Sub-Specialization

This again is a big subject and one which is very much alive. There is no doubt that the more pressure develops to create sub-specialists in an age of specialists, the more necessary is it for there to be the maximum common basic groundwork if splintering, or the destruction of ' one company ', is not to become a very real threat on the one hand, or ' specialization for the sake of specialization ', too much divorced from user and operational experience, to develop on the other.

But if it has been necessary to re-think the Basic Engineering Course, it has been even more necessary to re-think the Specialist and Dagger Courses along functional lines, starting with the question, ' What kind of sub-specializations do we need ? ' The G.L. development is, of course, central to this problem and so far as this paper is concerned the answer has still to be worked out, just as the question ' Will there be such a person, or appointment, as the E.-in-C. of the Fleet in the General List ? ' can only be answered by ' Wait and see '.

It is at about this point, where concepts of maintainer-user begin to come into the mind, that the officer problems begin to impinge on rating problems—pushing up hard from considerations of the actual job to be done. Here is the natural expression of the functional-institutional revolution, for one cannot adequately answer such questions as ' What sub-specializations do we need ? ' without some fairly definite, well-reasoned ideas on the ratings to be officered.

The problems relating to the Rating Structure, and some matters of general application will be discussed in Part II of this paper, to be published in a later Journal.—EDITOR.