

"Personnel Administration"

Presented by SOCIETY FOR PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION
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by Gen. E. F. O'Connor

Thank you, Mr. _____

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a pleasure for me to talk to you this evening about

Personnel Administration ---- one of many challenging fields

in our super-scientific culture of today.

SATURN HISTORY DOCUMENT
University of Alabama Research Institute
History of Science & Technology Group

Date ----- Doc. No. -----

I am sorry that I had to miss an earlier opportunity ---- last

February ---- to speak to you. ^{and let me now make} But I often find that my job ^{apology to} requires me, on very short notice, to be several hundred miles ^{you - I} from the place I had originally intended to be. ^{required at the last} ^{minute, however, to go} ^{to Wash.}

~~But I am here tonight, and business can wait for the next couple of hours. I don't plan to talk any longer than that.~~

Before I get into my subject for tonight, I would like to compliment



your aggressive organization. I understand you have an active, interested chapter membership. And I also understand that two of your objectives are to perform an increasingly better job for the employee, and to improve your service to line management. ¶

This is most
~~think that is very~~ commendable.

I was asked to give an operating official's views on how to improve the personnel service. That is a very serious subject ~~for an after dinner speech.~~

and I'll ask you to
~~Since I am not, by MOS a comedian,~~ please bear with me if my remarks are more of a lecture than light entertainment.

All of us, whether line managers or personnel administrators, are interested in the individual --- the person. For today, ^{more than ever} the individuals, ^{the} thoroughly educated --- the highly skilled person --- is certainly the most important and valuable tool that a manager uses to achieve his objectives. *ad lib about people, the human*
ad Paris Reed talks, etc.

In Marshall Space Flight Center, we stay acutely aware of this. Many of our problems are caused by human error or inattention to detail, and it is only through people --- individual specialists --- that we are able to resolve our technical problems.

Our mission in Industrial Operations involves the efforts of some 100,000 civil service and contractor people --- ~~each one an individual~~ --- so there are some built-in headaches and personnel problems that ^{make} ~~keep~~ us manpower conscious.

* Add lib the v Gorty we just had ---
incl Per. Adm. presence.

In the Saturn programs --- we directly manage and monitor the prime contractors. We indirectly manage the efforts of the thousands of subcontractors and vendors. And our greatest task is integrating the total effort into reliable hardware for ultimate mission success.

I am sure you know that the design and development of the Saturn launch vehicles were not achieved overnight nor by

a handful of people. Work on Saturn V is by a well-organized government-industry-academic team that is spread from coast to coast. And as each day passes, each member of this team contributes his specialized knowledge to the project. He knows the goals, the problems, and the solutions. And we hope he knows that one human failure can cause loss of a multimillion dollar vehicle --- or stage --- can jeopardize life and property --- and play havoc with this country's international prestige if the program encounters even a relatively moderate set back.

Throughout the entire program, thousands of individuals --- civil service and contractors alike --- carry the burden.

I am sure that the individual --- the man on the job --- is equally important in the Army, or other aerospace or industrial programs *in which* ~~that~~ many of you are involved *in. In any given specialty there* always ~~is~~ *an* example *baseball team.*

Each person, with his specialized knowledge and skills developed for his own particular job, enables the manager to achieve his goal of producing the best possible product or service --- at

minimum cost within the shortest possible time. I think it is also obvious that for each person to be effective he has to be stable --- to stay on the same job, or at least remain within the program. Many of us know from first hand current experiences --- what a turnover in personnel can do to a program in terms of meeting schedules, cost, and objectives. Schedules go out the door; costs over the ceiling; and objectives would be little more than a gleam in management's eye. It is vital then that management must have a stable work force to better our chance for success.

*Paradox — Loveless — MSFC
Army mi Cond — other people*

In the aerospace field, this stability is not easy. For the average employee of today is not only well-trained, highly skilled, and thoroughly educated --- he is mobile --- he is competent in a field where personnel shortages exist --- and employers are bidding against each other for his talents. If he becomes dissatisfied, he can easily leave one job and move to another without serious hardships or complications. And therefore,

maintaining a stable workforce is the area in which management must rely most heavily on the support of the specialized personnel administrators.

How can we achieve a stable workforce? I believe there are five key factors that contribute to a stable workforce.

First, we must hire competent and qualified people and assure that the individual's competence improves and advances in step with technological and scientific progress. Today's modern technology is a ~~ubiquitous~~ and powerful force in all decision areas, national as well as individual.

Second, we must utilize each person to the best advantage, both his and the program's. We must offer him a challenge, and some good opportunities for promotion and advancement.

Third, we must assure adequate, effective, and accurate

communications in all directions --- up, down, and laterally.

Fourth, we must assure well-trained, capable supervisors at all levels --- supervisors that contribute to solving personnel problems, not adding to them.

And fifth, we must provide good management. We must provide proper program objectives, obtain necessary funding, provide some flexibility in assignments to keep the right man in the right job.
Avoid the common peaks & valleys problem.

The first four of these factors I feel are the joint responsibility of personnel administration and management. It is up to you to advise and guide management in steps to assure that these factors are applied.

The fifth factor is primarily the responsibility of the manager. It is up to him to provide adequate program objectives: to obtain

Alternate Story

My recounting these things to you could be likened to the very tall psychiatrist who, each morning spit on the bald head of his practicing associate. The shorter of the two, endured this without a word for 39 weeks and finally the other one -- the taller psychiatrist -- asked him how he was able to ignore it. His response was that "you are the one with the problem."

Lest I be labeled the one with the problem, let me offer a few solutions.

sufficient funding to pay the salaries and buy the necessary materials; and to assure that the management and leadership are fully competent. Your specialized knowledge can be applied fruitfully wherever personnel are involved. And that's everywhere.

So far tonight I have dealt mostly in abstracts. And I have probably repeated things you have heard throughout your personnel careers, perhaps the music is different, but the message is the same. But I think it is very vital that all of us stay fully aware of the criticality of the workforce --- the individual --- and the total manpower resource.

My recounting these things to you could be likened to the wise old owl that sat in a tree in the forest and told the squirrels to gather nuts; the beavers to build dams; and the bees to make honey. One day the animals stopped to ask the owl how they were supposed to do all these things. To which the owl replied, "I don't know. I just make policy."

To avoid being labeled an owl, I would like to spend the next few minutes on some general thoughts and specific ways the Personnel staff can help ^{improve} ~~achieve stability~~ of the workforce.

The first is to provide full-time support. Not just when major problems arise; not just on the days we are hiring or the days we are processing separations. But every day.

The manager has

~~We need~~ to see you before personnel problems reach major proportion, so they can be solved with ^{out} ~~no~~ repercussion.

We need your advice every day on changes and actions that involve our employees and their reaction to change.

To be able to provide this close support, you must live with ^{& between} management and the employee. Personnel administration can not operate out of an ivory tower, devising policy and finding

theoretical solutions to general personnel problems. You have to be at the side of the supervisor and the employee, seeing through their eyes the problems involved in the day-by-day struggle of getting the job done. And all too frequently the theoretical solutions devised in an ivory tower collapse when applied to the prickly problems of real life.

Another advantage of this day-by-day support is that it provides a greater insight into the other person's problems, and provides for a coordinated effort to achieve common goals. And all of us, I hope --- operating official --- employee --- and personnel administrator --- have common goals.

This rapport can be helped or hindered by the way an organization is structured, but relatively only in a minor way. It matters not if the personnel staff is organized on

a generalist or specialist concept. Or if, operating offices perform functions that strictly speaking belong to personnel. For example, within Industrial Operations, the administrative offices supporting organizational elements have become involved in the personnel processes over the past few years. I am not saying this is good or bad, but as long as they are in the loop they can and should facilitate this day-to-day support. But because they are there let's not consider them the only means for establishing rapport.

But the manager --- the supervisor --- the employee each need support and counsel across the board in the personnel disciplines, and the better the rapport, the better the end result of the personnel service, and the better the chances of success for the entire organization. ^{You all} I can remember when the government personnel specialist was expected to spend 75 percent of his ^{down} time in the organization he served.

Another point, is that the personnel staff must give rapid response to problems and requests for personnel actions. It may not always be possible to provide a fast solution to problems and requests. But there is nothing more frustrating to operating officials for weeks to lapse without action. From the manager's point of view, if serious technical problems can be solved quickly --- and they are --- then it should be possible for the personnel problems and important personnel actions to be handled with the same degree of urgency.

My next point concerns personnel regulations. In your role of staff support, we need your very aggressive help --- your completed staff work in its broadest sense --- in

- making use of the flexibility,
- understanding the personnel policies and regulations,
- initiating policy changes when appropriate, and I'll never

believe you don't have the influence to initiate a needed change.

- we need you to communicate the policy to the operating official, and I'm not just talking about xerox copies.
- we need your help in not applying an unwritten or unofficial policy --- make sure that every change in policy and practice is de jure --- absolutely official and documented --- not an arbitrary decision in anticipation of some possible future event.

With regard to the subject of policy and the entire civil service and the personnel system, I do not personally feel that there have been enough radical changes over the past several years. There has been progress, I am sure, but to a great extent it has been application of technology developed elsewhere -- use of computers -- new communications equipment, etc.

To the manager, it appears that the field of personnel management has been seriously lacking in down to earth research --- research and study to update and strengthen the civil service and personnel systems.

Liken it to Contracting - keep boss out of jail

Through well applied research, I believe we would learn that quick but sweeping reforms are necessary - reforms in organization concepts, reforms in pay systems, reforms in the duality of ceilings on both manpower and cost, improvements in management concepts, etc.

As another point, a well organized and well directed personnel research program is needed to plan for training concepts --- concepts and programs to keep the individual attuned to the technology with which he must advance.

Generally, I feel that in planning and updating its training, the military is well ahead of its civil service counterparts --- most industries --- and even the ^{academic world.} ~~academia~~. The military appears to be far more successful in ^{its} ~~their~~ career planning, and in long range development of the managers of tomorrow. (*if I don't say this subjectively because I'm military.*)

I feel that for the next ten or twelve years, well planned career development programs, should be and can be designed to preclude having to absent the man from the job every few years on a sabbatical ^{for upgrading.}. If well conceived and well planned, much of the training can be accomplished on the job - in the laboratory - or in the locality, and I predict that a shorter work week --- either 32 or 36 hours --- will be one of the things that will make this possible.

~~We may get to the point where we have to afford a sabbatical, but I believe that careful study, research and planning, will provide better schemes.~~

Shige { Without this research, and some real down-to-earth long range planning by both government and industry --- we can not be sure that people with the right kind of talent, the right kind of training, and the right kind and amount of genius --- will be available to solve the complex problems of the future - either the economic - the social - the military or the technological problems that are bound to arise.

We have, as yet, no sure way to figure out what makes genius or how to create it. But we can and we should study the way to get things done, we can learn certain distinctions about ways that lead to success, and we should be able to systematize them and repeat them in an experimental pattern. This type of research is needed today in executive training. The employee or the executive, trained only in the traditional principles and able to operate only in accord with them, will not be adequate to cope with problems of tomorrow.

We need now ---- all of us who have any influence on the personnel systems, to plan ---- through careful research and study for such things as:

- What will be the motivating factors ten years from now.
- In salary administration, will we need a system which allows more latitude for supervisory judgment?
- Will we be able to effectively use the new computers now being developed. For example, I was told recently that there is a computer being developed today that will be able to store on just a few tapes the equivalent of twenty pages of information on every man, woman, and child in this country. Are we ready to use this capability effectively and economically? What really are the possibilities of these new computers in the field of Personnel Administration?
- Finally, what is the impact on the individual of this

blithely
racing technology that we so blithfully accept?

- How will it affect the man on the job?
- Will he be psychologically able to throw away years of training and experience, and learn a completely new field?
- Does the average man have the capability to rapidly accept and adapt to change in his vocation?
- Or ^{are} we going to have to institute change slowly?

I have given you all of these questions and no answers ---- the answers will have to be found in the future.

I think we can expect some real progress in the personnel and management sciences, to come from the National Academy of Public Administration which was formed a few months ago.

It, the National Academy of Sciences and the National

Academy of Engineering, will greatly increase our growing national capability for joining science, engineering and management.

Shape - optional

~~The National Academy of Public Administration and NASA are now developing ways and means through which research by competent scholars in the administrative disciplines can use various NASA installations as laboratories. So it is almost certain that many of us in the Huntsville area will have an opportunity to participate in some way in this important research effort. And even though these studies will not relate solely to the personnel administration field, their progress will concern management and the behavioral sciences, in which the Personnel Office of the future must have more knowledge.~~

With respect to the future of personnel administration, I would like to close with this thought. I suggest that it is not just the Civil Service Commission, or the Corporate Office, but it is also you --- the people in the field --- who must be more

aggressive and lead the way in developing newer and more efficient ways to answer the problems and achieve the long range goals of personnel administration. You in the field must recognize the possibilities --- the challenges -- the needed advances in human relations, And achieve them.

I am reminded of the 4 Star Gen. I once worked for who used to say "You Majors & Colonels are not running the Air Force very well."

Based on your past performance I am confident you will. I feel sure that with your collective intelligence and capability, you can achieve about anything you aspire to do.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak to you. And I hope my remarks --- from the manager's viewpoint --- are helpful.