678 Canal Street
Placerville, California
December 20, 1967

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FINANCES

In going through some old files, I came across the following paper that was written in longhand and dated April 4, 1950. This was suggested by the Regional Forester prior to the time of my retirement, however, it was never typed or turned into the Forest Service files.

GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT OF PEOPLE AND MONIES

Foreward:

Having been employed by the Forest Service, and having by position and tenure, had to handle people and finances for some 39 years, while in such employ, a great many changes in practices and policies have taken place which I will attempt to recall.

What I relate will probably be of only historical value. It necessarily points in but one direction and that being a steady buildup year after year in complexities in procedure which detracts from efficiency and production and becomes increasingly more costly.

PERSONNEL - I

Recruitment:

In 1910, the selection of the Ranger personnel came about through an examination consisting of identification of trees by their cones and needles, bark, etc. This also applied to a few grasses and browse plants which had to be identified by the applicant from samples of the plant itself and the seed therefrom.

The other phase of the examination was a practical physical demonstration of the applicant's ability to ride, pack, pace, survey, use an axe, shovel, hoe and pick, and set up a camp, care for his stock, etc.

The applicant was rated by the Supervisor and his Staff, giving the examination, and such rating was sent to the Civil Service Commission (or its' substitute) for review.

If the applicant had a rating of 70%, he passed and later was offered a position on some Forest.

Because of the low salary paid (about $75.00 per month), there did not exist a long list of men to choose from, so the demand exceeded the supply.

The process of securing personnel was simple as were the processes of getting rid of inefficient persons. In the latter case, your superior officer told you once about your shortcomings and if they were not overcome, he handed you a resignation blank, asking your cooperation in signing it.

As most of us in those days had some pride and did not depend on political, fraternal or union organizations to support our weaknesses, we readily complied, or showed our independence by quitting without signing any document.

During this era, most of the Administrative personnel was secured from local communities, which was a good practice and the start of selling Government Forest philosophy to the local population, which, after all, was about the only class of people we were dealing with. In other words, we could not have survived by fighting local sentiment, so we took into the organization some of these people to carry the word.

With the advent of automobile transportation and the impact of increasing use of the resources of the Forest, it was necessary to secure professional men and women to plan and direct our uses so as to properly divide the activities and products of the Forest and prevent interference between such.

When this point was reached, we necessarily went a-field to secure such talents but still kept in some sort of balance both types of personnel, depending on the work to be accomplished.

Back in the late twenties there did not seem to be too much sentiment from the field to the inclusion of the so-called tenhnical personnel. However, as the crop of college trained men became more numerous, from the colleges having Forestry courses, the impact from such educational institutions on the Chief to use their product became evident and the battle was on.

We became so wrapped up in the possibilities of the new kind of human machines offered us that from this point on we did not believe any job could be accomplished unless it was conceived, studied, analyzed and debated from the professional approach.

We somehow lost track of the fact that the human equasion must be considered in selecting personnel in field administration of people used to doing things. Also, that there was just as much risk of failure of individuals in this class of men as with the other that heretofore had been used.

The matter of recruitment of short term personnel was fairly easy as it was the general custom, in the mountain communities, that most work was seasonal, such as mining, lumbering, harvesting agriculture crops, etc.

The men employed usually had their own places on which to work during the winter months or else they secured outside work on ranches or in mines. As a whole, we were able to be selective and secure fairly good men for the type of employment they were to be used on.

There was no invasion of the professional trained men into this field because of the short duration of the job and that one had to have several years of experience with tools of labor before he was acceptable.

During this period, the Administrative Officers down to the Ranger and Construction Foremen, were able to select and dismiss their own men.

I believe that during this period, a greater production was secured for our dollar expended than since that time. I might also add, pride of good accomplishment was still a factor in the administrator's mind complied with the knowledge that production and the quality of such depended on whether he could hire the same men the next season.

Nepotism was rarely evident. Local employment brought closer and better relationships with mountain communities.

During the depression years, from 1931 to 1936, the lot of the short term employee was changed as he could secure little or no outside employment during winter months and we undertook ways and means to try and secure his Civil Service status, and as far as funds would permit, yearlong employment, never realizing that we were putting ourselves in a position where we might not be able to hire him and he would be put in competition with outside people on the selective list.

One other purpose in employing some former short term men was to have District career men, as F.C.A.'s and Suppression Foremen who would always be able to carry on, through familiarity with the area where employed, the fire protection and improvement maintenance work, as well as minor administrative work.

Such men would be of great aid to new Rangers as well as giving at least some service to the public which sags badly when there is personnel changes at the District Ranger level.

With all of our good intentions, and they were sound, we must have weakened to the pressures of our educational institutions to take their product and were again invaded by the professionally trained into positions which were never set up for such even though they frankly stated it never was their intention to be satisfied with the position they were employed in, as a life's work.

I never allowed such invation on this Forest, although battles to defend my position caused me many a tragic hour and bitter official arguments. The pendulum seems to now be swinging toward the original concept of which I feel deeply grateful.

In all successful organizations, the basic principle of the use of personnel from the masses instead of the classes has been shown most successfully, with selections only dependent on the jobs to be performed.

The final withdrawal of recruitment by local administrators has now been extended down to the skilled and common laborer, even though they may be hired for a few days or seasonally.

One wonders why it has been necessary to build up an office of Personnel in the Region, from one man and a clerk under the office of Operation to A.F.R. position with an assistant and hosts of clerks and stenographers. Also, why on each Forest it now takes nearly the entire time of from one to two employees to recruit and process people so they will become pure, clean and respectable, and acceptable to be hired.

Some of the items that have contributed to this build-up are as I see it:

1. Failure to remove military restrictions imposed during World War I and II, which were necessary for security reasons under war conditions only.

2. Setting up Veteran's preference during a national wave of appreciation for sacrifices made or presumed to have been made.

3. Impacts of Unionization of Industrial Labor, who through the use of such organizations, secure a defense for the individual who is deficient in many instances. We have now patterened our procedure along such lines.

4. Establishment of unemployment offices both State and National for securing short term employees.

5. Establishment of an 8 hour day and 40 hours per week with overtime for any additional time put in by any employee.

6. Establishment of rest periods during working hours for certain classes of employees.

7. Establishment of grievance committees to protect the employees from the employer.

8. Establishment of State unemployment insurance for seasonal workers.

9. Holding written examinations for all Civil Service employment centralizing their final ratings and listings nationally.

10. Making it mandatory to process each individual time after time when they are hired for intermittent service, or change of position.

As an example, a week ago we hired 6 men to plant seedlings on a 1949 burn. Even though some of the men had been employed on short term jobs during the summer of 1949, it took 7 hours of time to make out the necessary papers so they could go to work. The time of the men did not cost the Government anything, but the time of the clerk did.

11. Establishment of narrow classification of jobs, with written descriptions to try and keep the employee from being misassigned, as we see it, when likely all the poor recruit wants is a job and paycheck.

12. Establishment of a procedure of rating on individuals past work which, while pretty on paper, is time consuming, ponderous and unnecessary.

These items affect recruitment and the attitude of the recruit and increase the cost to the Government.

One suggestion I have to help unload the burden would be to employ people through demonstration in an apprentice position and then accept them without formal examination, or reject them. After all, our field men must know what kind of a human tool they will need to accomplish their jobs.

Recruitment should be confined to securing employees, except for brackets above the Ranger levels, to residents of the State and for below Ranger levels, to the communities in and adjacent to each Forest.

TRAINING - II

The first steps that related to training was the old Ranger examination and the Guard Schools held after the 1924 burning we received.

In the former case, the recruit demonstrated that he had training or he could not have qualified. In the latter case, we undertook to train our short term men as to how to act during emergency conditions of such magnitude as the 1924 season challenged us to meet.

The reason for such training was thus brought about by conditions where integration of effort was necessary if we hoped to get on top of the fire job. Since that time, a continuous program of training in fire control personnel has been the order.

The training of our manpower prior to the above informal and formal training, consisted of the burden being on the employee to master the tools and services of his appointed job. This challange was met with an eagerness by the employee as there was self pride in nearly all the employees that they wished to be known as being fully capable.

Many hours were spent by employees on their own time mastering things unfamiliar to them.

During the late 1920's, the industrial world entered into the field of training to secure production, especially in the mechanical line; also, the sciences were given an uplift to meet the demands of the change to the mechanical.

I believe during this period is where we lost the self pride of the employee. As the demands were so great that both educational and industrial institutions bore down on the basic, leaving their product to be finished by the employer in future training.

Labor demands in salary also skipped the old apprenticeship period so did the Forest Service, with the result our employees started to come to us with titles and salary and it was our job to fit them in by finished training.

Informal self-training has more or less disappeared, how I do not venture to state, but this is evident, that many of our new and some of our old employees believe it is incumbent on the Service to continually run training classes at Government expense and pay for time to keep its employees capable or partially capable of holding down their jobs.

Add this burden to an administrative burden and one really has a load "Sans Production".

Our Old Service sure took training so seriously that in one case I remember a Forest Graduate was put in a training position under a District Ranger and the D. R. was pointedly told that failure to properly train this man would be reflection on his ability, nothing being said to the recruit about what he was supposed to give, if anything.

The old D. R. rose to the bait and sent in a training plan of subjects to be covered. After approval of such, the job started by him giving the recruit assignments item by item and seeing to it that he did a creditable job before taking up the next item.

This boy graduated in good shape and the Ranger saved his face and the Service was supposed to have a man ready to go to work equipped with:

a. One good professional formal education. Cost some $5,000.00 to the boy.

b. One well passed Civil Service examination.

c. Training by doing and passing a critic's review nearly all items he would have to do or supervise.

The steps and care taken by the Service to protect the individuals investment in himself, to try and secure some increment for the Forest Service and to force a man to give of his knowledge by training was thus all patted down by a formula and executed.

The one failure was the human equasion or the individual himself. He is no longer in the Service and both he and the Service are Very Happy. I know this because I had the sad job of getting him out of the Service and he is happy and successful where he now works.

When the battle was over, it was found that:

a. The boy was a pansy.

b. He had been raised as such.

c. He loved the Bees and Flowers and was an excellent botanist.

d. The Ranger that trained him found that he could do but one thing at a time without interruption, so to save his position trained him in one thing at a time.

e. He had no interest in the Service other than his pay check and his desire to be constantly trained if he was paid for it.

f. Having no interest, he had nothing to give, so gave nothing by personal sacrifice.

The poor lad and short changed Forest Service both had and still have my sympathy, but having known the Forest Service longer than the boy, I had to act.

It was really pitiful to watch this lad perform each morning on his District when improvement crews, fire crews, special users and recreation visitors descended.

It was too much, too often, yet he passed a Civil Service examination and was supposed to be qualified to be trained and trained and trained.

The above narrative is not written with any thought that I don't believe in training men but to bring out the fact that we have lost much and stand to lose more if we cannot by some method divide the responsibility of securing proper training between the Service and the individual, and thus appeal to his strength, not his weaknesses.

The whole philosophy, as it now stands, when a person working for the Service fails is to criticize all who employed him for not giving him more of our time in training.

I am of the firm opinion that an apprenticeship served by our new employees, at an apprenticeship's salary, would aid both the Service and the employee.

RATING - III

At the time I entered the Service (with the exception of the Ranger's examination which was a form of rating a human being on his knowledge of the subjects given him), the accepted rating within and outside the Service was simple and consisted of the following two items:

1. A good employee.

2. A failure.

The action upon such a decision was as easy as separation of a corral full of black and white sheep.

Perhaps it is necessary, with more population, that we should act as we now must by making an analysis in detail of the component parts (that have to be defended) which makes us decide why we rate an individual Good or a Failure, also it might seem necessary to broaden our decisions by defining their qualities of Goodness or Failures the way we now do, but frankly it seems silly, time consuming and costly.

The only thing in its favor is that it does set up a greater work load for more employment and a beautiful field for argument.

Any tool given a doer is easily rated by its productiveness - Good or Bad - not How Good or How Bad. This I believe is applicable to the human tool which is always given the opportunity to correct its bad points if they care to do so and if not, why bother with them.

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Eldorado National Forest
1920 to 1950