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**LEADERSHIP IN A FREE SOCIETY**

**LEADERSHIP  
IN A FREE SOCIETY**

**A STUDY IN HUMAN RELATIONS BASED ON AN ANALYSIS  
OF PRESENT-DAY INDUSTRIAL CIVILIZATION**

**BY**

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TO

ELTON MAYO

“WHAT HE UNDERTOOK THEREBY BECAME IMPORTANT”

## PREFACE

ORDERLY society is based upon routine, custom and habitual association. These characteristics are the necessary foundation for human initiative and for the effective experience of individual adventure. The rise of modern technology has resulted in a new type of progressive society, and it has yet to be demonstrated whether under modern conditions social living can retain the stability needed for human satisfaction. More precisely, the practical problem is to investigate the type of social structure which can maintain itself whilst adapting its form to the ceaseless advance of material invention.

That is the problem with which this volume is concerned. It is written for those who seek a solution in intelligent evolution based on a faithful analysis of the observable facts, rather than in some radical departure from accustomed procedures.

Three characteristics of our civilization appear important to the present problem. First, we have the technical skills to produce a sufficiency of commodities not only to provide for the physical necessities of every man, woman and child, but also to provide them with a physical environment in which satisfying social relationships might be developed. Secondly, an industrial organization has been developed around these technical skills with little regard for the human satisfactions, and consequently adequate social living has not in fact developed to the degree which is possible, given our technical skills. The third factor is not that of greater knowledge, but the rise of technical procedures for a continuous *advance* in knowledge and especially in its practical applications. For the first time, the human race has set itself the problem of combining the stability of routine with adaptations to fast and continuous change. The possible extension of civilized living, as we understand it, depends upon the

ability of society to maintain a just balance between these two conflicting tendencies. The problem centres itself somewhere in the activities of business and industry.

The economic institutions of an industrial community are at once its chief danger and its best hope. These represent the most widespread and developed examples of orderly human association, and they are also directly responsible for the disorders resulting from rapid changes in everyday living. Consequently, the present essay is largely concerned with the impact of business and industrial institutions upon society at large. And if little explicit attention is given to less organized activities, such, for example, as art and individual expression, this is not through any doubt as to their importance for human satisfaction, but because the central problem at the moment appears to lie in the organization of industry and in its wider relations to society.

Even with this limitation, the subject is too vast for systematic treatment in one volume or by one author. Instead of attempting this impossible task, it has seemed wiser to consider a few typical problems and situations, and so by a judicious selection to present a picture which shall be sufficiently representative of the whole.

In Part I, the relations of business to social activity are considered, with particular attention to systematic studies of the functioning of working groups and to the place of leadership in collective action. Part II has a wider scope, and seeks to illustrate the ceaseless interaction between human motives and the shape and development of organized institutions. These two parts are not sharply distinguished, and in general the drift is from more restricted to broader considerations. Part III consists in a short restatement of the original problem as an outcome of the present inquiry.

It is impossible to write a book without becoming acutely aware of an indebtedness both to previous writers and to one's colleagues and associates. Effective thinking is to a large extent

a social process; it results from an interaction between members of a group, each contributing his individual experiences and attitudes to the common stock.

I have had the good fortune to work with colleagues who, from various angles, have been investigating the problems connected with human association, and especially as these relate to industrial communities. A working collaboration including physiologists, social anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, those investigating various aspects of business administration, and industrial administrators, cannot fail to provide the conditions for a liberal education. My debt is correspondingly great. It is also difficult to define; for it is not so much a matter of acknowledging this or that specific idea, as of recognizing the degree in which the attitude of any one member is an outcome of a collective enterprise.

For the particular form in which this essay has taken shape, and for the opinions expressed, I cannot hold my colleagues responsible, but if there is any merit in this presentation it must be regarded as an individual expression of a genuinely social activity.

I owe too much to the inspiration of Professor Elton Mayo not to mention his name. It is not easy to express a real obligation without either appearing perfunctory where more is intended, or failing in a decent reserve. My colleagues will understand me when I say that without Elton Mayo's genius for integrating the activities of a working group, and without his unfailing generosity in putting his ideas and wisdom at the disposal of his followers, some of us, I in particular, would have had no insight by which to approach the critical problem of a civilization committed for the first time to a continuous technological evolution, with all that implies in the way of skilled social readjustment.

I am indebted to the editors of the following periodicals for permission to make use of the articles listed below. The four following articles, by the present author, were originally published in the *Harvard Business Review* and have been incorpo-

rated, with suitable alterations, into the present book: *Planning Standardized Components to Secure Variety in Products*, April, 1932; *The Scientific Study of the Industrial Worker*, July, 1934; *Human Relations within Industrial Groups*, Autumn, 1935; *Leadership within Industrial Organizations*, Winter, 1936. A fifth article, *Social Relationships in the Factory: A Study of an Industrial Group*, was published in *The Human Factor*, November, 1935, and has been extensively used in Chapter III. I am similarly indebted to Messrs. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, for consenting to the quotation in Chapter VIII from *Personnel Administration* by Tead and Metcalf, and to the editor of the *New York Times* for the quotation in Chapter XV from an address by President Lincoln, first published in that paper on the 12th of February, 1936.

Finally, my thanks are due to Miss Helen M. Mitchell for the various diagrams in this book, and to Mrs. T. H. Thomas for revising the proofs and providing the index.

T. N. WHITEHEAD.

Cambridge, Massachusetts  
March, 1936



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