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CONTENTS

	Page
Problems of Personnel in Public Services	357
Relativity on Parade. By Prof. W. H. McCrea	359
Immunity against Animal Parasites. By Lieut.-Col. F. Murgatroyd	360
A Study of Delinquency. By Prof. Cyril Burt.	361
The Physical Basis of Life. By Dr. I. Manton	362
New Light on the Apocalypse of St. John. By B.M.B.	363
Relation of Mineral Resources to World Peace. By Sir Thomas Holland, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., F.R.S.	364
Reflexion of X-Rays with Change of Frequency. By Sir C. V. Raman, F.R.S.	366
News and Views	369
Letters to the Editors :	
Functions of the Research Associations.—Dr. F. C. Toy ; Sir Lawrence Bragg, F.R.S.	373
Encouragement of Research in Industry.—Philip R. Coursey	374
Homology of the Campaniform Organs on the Wing of <i>Drosophila melanogaster</i> .—Dr. A. D. Lees	375
Feeding of the Common Toad.—O. R. Barclay	376
Response to Colour in Birds.—Dr. Stuart G. Smith	376
A False-Ring Pattern in Larch.—Dr. C. G. Dobbs	377
The So-called 'Granite Axial Core' of the Himalaya. —Major N. E. Odell	379
The Slide Rule Cursor.—W. R. Ashby	379
Commission of Forestry Research in Africa.—E. N. Corbyn	379
Paracelsus and "Basil Valentine".—Prof. F. A. Paneth ; Dr. W. H. S. Jones	380
Feedback Amplifiers. By C. A. A. Wass	381
Conical Refraction. By Sidney Melmore	382
Central Scientific and Technical Board	383
Recent Scientific and Technical Books	Supp. ii

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PROBLEMS OF PERSONNEL IN PUBLIC SERVICES

THE problem of personnel in the Civil Service and other public services cannot be considered altogether apart from the nature and range of the work which the post-war public services will be called upon to do, and this in turn is affected by the nature of the social and economic structure of the country. It is not only that free migration and interchange both between the national and municipal services and between these and the public or semi-public corporations is much to be desired, but rather that the essential social structure of the community and the relative importance of the service and the profit motives have important repercussions. It must obviously influence the underlying philosophy of the Civil Servant, whether the source of his inspiration be integrity and tendency to play for safety as in the past, or that more difficult part now needed of reconciling integrity and firmness of administration with the acceptance of responsibility and the capacity for co-ordinated initiative; the character of the new machinery of government is also of fundamental importance. However far that passion for excellence insisted upon by Lord Haldane may sway a reconstructed Civil Service from top to bottom, it will not function with the desired efficiency unless the machinery of government itself is adapted to the new demands. Without any disparagement of a Service which has deservedly earned itself a unique reputation throughout the world, it is clear that adjustment, both of the personnel and of methods of working, is required to meet present and future problems.

Consciousness of this lies behind the views which have openly been expressed in the Press regarding Treasury control and the 'head' of the Civil Service, arising out of the appointment of a new Permanent Secretary of the Treasury. The real point at issue is that of the establishment control stressed in the Haldane report, later in that of the Tomlin Commission and still more recently in a PEP broadsheet. The headship of the Civil Service is an office of great and increasing importance, but it can no longer be usefully combined with the office of Permanent Secretary to the Treasury. The interest in war-time of getting a job done quickly and efficiently, the question of cost being subordinate, is at last compelling recognition in the Civil Service of the principles of staff management as it is understood and practised in modern industry.

Establishment problems are inherent in every form of complex industry and are the regular currency of industrial and business management. Moreover, though it would be rash to assume that all the solutions found successful in the competitive world are applicable to the organization of the Civil Service of Great Britain, the fact that no large concern has found the successful management of its establishment compatible with a close union of staffing and financial functions cannot be disregarded. Cost and economy are considerations fundamentally distinct

from those of efficient staff control, the object of which is to see that the right men are found for each job, and then that the conditions of their work are such as to offer the least hindrance to their doing the best that is in them. This is the main test of efficient selection, training, remuneration, promotion, welfare, retirement, or replacement problems, and in these allied questions of the development of efficient methods of working which constitute the essential staffing problems.

The attention which has been directed to such matters in that highly suggestive American report of the President's Committee on Administrative Management should be given careful consideration. Although much of the report is concerned with those problems of the machinery of government which are peculiar to the American constitution, there are sections of profound interest at the present time when the British machinery of government is under examination, and especially in connexion with the nature and extent to which Government control may have to be extended after the War and the manner in which such control should be exercised. Notably is this true of the comments of the report on staff matters and those fundamental principles of administration which are germane to any modern efficient organization.

One of the most important recommendations of this authoritative committee is the development of functional investigation and research into administrative problems as a regular aid to management. "Economy and efficiency in government", says the report, "require constant investigation and reorganization of the administrative structure. It is a mistake to assume that government can be reorganized once and for all. A continuous study of the administrative organization of the huge Federal machine is necessary. New activities are constantly emerging and old activities are constantly changing, increasing or disappearing. Unless there is a special agency equipped to investigate problems of organization, new activities are set up without careful attention as to where they should be located and what kind of organization is required. On the other hand, when the need for certain government activities declines or disappears, unless there is a special agency constantly studying the organizational requirements, adjustments are made late or not at all."

The application of this argument to British conditions needs no further emphasis, and the fate of the Haldane report, to which this President's Committee's report is the American counterpart, though on a larger scale, is sufficient warning of the danger of continued neglect. In addition to the establishment of a Civil Service Administrator and a Civil Service Board to handle matters of recruitment and management of personnel, the report urges that a division of administrative research in the Bureau of the Budget is the logical place to develop these functions, and it is clear from the outline of the functions of the Division given in the report that the President's Committee has very clear ideas as to the Division's independence and freedom from

defects which characterize Treasury control in Great Britain.

"The Division", says the report, "should stimulate the continuous study of organization, methods of procedure, at the departmental or bureau level by the Departments and Bureaux themselves. It should engage in such studies on its own initiative where necessary but should follow the policy of aiding and encouraging the Departments in the study of their own organization procedural problems. It should endeavour to develop principles of organization that have general applicability and to act as a clearing house, consultation centre for administrative research regarding the Department. Persons engaged in administrative research should be free from routine duties involving handling budget estimates. The administrative research activity should be concentrated in a separate division of the Bureau of the Budget. It should be headed by a permanent chief possessing in unusual degree imagination, vision, creativeness and analytical insight as well as intimate acquaintanceship with both the practices of government and the principles of public administration. The research division must be staffed with persons of unusually high competence. Important research assignments upon administrative problems can be carried out successfully only by highly trained and experienced persons familiar with the organization techniques of public administration."

The sanity and breadth of vision of this admirable report should earn for it widespread attention in Great Britain. Government, in its view, is a 'going concern', not a static institution. New activities should be organized on the basis of purpose, so that purpose may be the central driving force of the organization. While, however, new purposes cannot be achieved without broad freedom to experiment, when an activity is organized, its major policies established, its purposes accepted and understood, and its work in the main placed on a routine basis, the activity should be brought into the normal structure of organization and under the normal conditions.

The bearing of these observations on government problems in regard to reconstruction agencies is quite clear; those on the human aspects of government and the note that reorganization should be approached as a problem of morale and personnel fully as much as a task of logic and management are equally important. Nor are they irrelevant to the organization of the war effort. Honesty and courage alone are not enough for victory, either in peace or in war. Intelligence, vision, fairness, firmness and flexibility are required in an assembled competent strong organization of democracy. Strong executive leadership is essential to democratic government to-day—on that point there is complete unanimity among critics of H. M. Government both in the field of strategy and in that of production, and the American report urges that the forward march of American democracy at this point of its history depends more upon effective management of all its multitudinous activities than upon any other single factor.

From that opinion there will be no dissent. It is equally true in Great Britain, even when we remember that management is a servant, not a master, a means, not an end, a tool in the hands—and for the purposes—of the people. There can be no doubt that, as the two democracies continue to get “mixed up” in their affairs, in Mr. Churchill’s phrase, their outlook and motives must interact powerfully on one another. The report of the Committee on Administrative Management will not pass unnoticed in Great Britain.

In a recent House of Lords debate Lord Portal endorsed Lord Reith’s remarks about the importance of efficiency in the Civil Service. His statement was largely an outline of the procedure being adopted by the Ministries concerned with post-war reconstruction, but he agreed as to the importance of right timing in handling these matters, and that the necessary schemes for public services should be ready to put into operation at the appropriate time.

Without going into the details of the arrangements outlined by Lord Portal, it is clear that the Government is not unmindful of the importance of the machinery of government and the efficiency of administration. Nothing must be allowed to interfere, for example, with the handling of the transport question so that the greatest transport resources are brought to bear and used most efficiently during the War, but while any effective solution to transport problems is bound, as Lord Portal pointed out, to be controversial, the Ministry of War Transport is preparing its own scheme of reconstruction. Similarly, the Paymaster-General is examining the reorganization of electricity from the point of view of introducing a better diversity of load, greater standardization of voltage and uniformity of charges, adoption of a common policy with regard to development, and placing the best engineering advice at the disposal of all distributors. Water, which comes under the Ministry of Health, gas under the new Ministry of Fuel, Light and Power, and the location of industry under the Board of Trade, are other matters on which reports are at present being collated and submitted to a ministerial committee over which the Paymaster-General presides.

Lord Portal’s statement will almost certainly reinforce the plea for wider powers for the new Ministry of Planning. The functions of the Ministry of Works and Buildings are only a section of those which require central co-ordination and direction, and though there are encouraging signs in Lord Portal’s statement, the trend of the debates on war production and other matters in which the organization of government is of prime importance does not indicate that the Government in Great Britain has yet taken to heart the arguments so cogently advanced in the United States. It is to be hoped that the increasing contact with the United States and the constructive criticism of the Select Committee on National Expenditure and other bodies may not fail to have their due effect, and will lead to the adoption of the most effective tools and machinery to implement the national effort, no matter what departmental interests or traditional views may bar the way.

RELATIVITY ON PARADE

Introduction to the Theory of Relativity

By Prof. Peter Gabriel Bergmann. (Prentice-Hall Physics Series.) Pp. xvi+287. (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1942.) 4.50 dollars.

THE number of systematic treatises on relativity is not unduly large. This is partly because, since the first few years after Einstein’s announcement of the ‘general’ theory in 1917, it has undergone no fundamental development, and partly because the early expositions were so good. One cannot forbear mentioning those of Eddington, von Laue, Pauli, and Weyl. But these were addressed mainly to professionals, and, in spite of subsequent accounts from various points of view, there is still room for a plain text-book suitable for undergraduates reading relativity as a special subject, or for research students needing a working knowledge of it. Prof. Bergmann’s book is designed to meet such requirements.

The book is in three parts. The first constitutes a fairly comprehensive account of ‘special’ relativity; it includes an introduction to tensor calculus, and the theory itself is presented in tensor form. The second is a concise account of ‘general’ relativity; it consists mainly of a general study of the field equations and an account of standard rigorous solutions in special cases, together with a brief account of the experimental tests of the theory, and a sketch of recent work by Einstein, Infeld and Hoffmann showing how the field equations determine the equations of motion. The third is an introduction to ‘unified’ field theories, that is, those which incorporate also electromagnetic phenomena in a geometrical system as general relativity incorporates gravitational phenomena in its geometry; after an outline of Weyl’s gauge-invariant geometry, it provides a formulation of five-dimensional theory which can be applied to projective field-theories, to Kaluza’s theory, and to extensions of the latter in which the author has been a recent collaborator with Einstein.

As is to be expected of a book commended in a foreword by Prof. Einstein, it has many admirable and exceedingly valuable features. But it is relativity on parade, a well-ordered march-past of selected units beautifully turned out in parade dress. It is *not* relativity in action, perhaps much less tidy, but full of verve in its adventurous penetration of new territories. Of course, from the parade-ground behaviour of a force, an experienced commander can infer how it will go into action. But to the uninitiated this is not so easy; and one believes that something analogous will represent the experience of different classes of readers of this book.

The author says that “the main emphasis of the book is on the development of the basic ideas of the theory of relativity”. Bearing out the foregoing criticism, one actually finds the emphasis falling unduly upon their formal development. Indeed, one wishes that some of the formalism of the development had been spared for the statement of the ideas themselves. Some of these, such as the reason for the linearity of the Lorentz transformation, the principle of general covariance, and the reasons for taking the world-lines of free particles to be ordinary geodesics and those of light-pulses to be null geodesics, are introduced rather casually and obscurely, and their implications by no means clearly brought out. In fact, the whole treatment of the postulates is neither compelling nor profound. For example, a