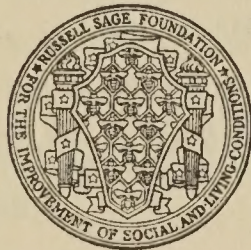


CIVIL SERVICE IN PUBLIC WELFARE

A DISCUSSION OF EFFECTIVE SELECTION
OF PUBLIC SOCIAL WORK PERSONNEL
THROUGH THE MERIT SYSTEM

BY
ALICE CAMPBELL KLEIN



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FOREWORD

PROBABLY no factor has more powerfully conditioned the practice of social work during the past decade than has the shift of its personnel from private to public auspices. At the onset of the depression of the 1930's the only federal agencies employing any large numbers of social workers were the bureaus in the Department of Labor concerned with the welfare of women and children. State departments of public welfare, where they existed and were well organized, employed some social workers, and a few were to be found scattered through some state health and labor departments. County and municipal welfare agencies, with notable exceptions, were operated with but few persons on their staffs who could be called trained social workers. Both in numbers and in articulateness about the profession, the employes of privately supported social agencies were in the ascendant. Civil service examinations, except for positions in a few federal bureaus or departments, were not matters of personal moment to social workers in general, and channels by which they might influence or participate in the conduct of such examinations were largely non-existent or as yet undiscovered.

With the deepening of the depression and the creation of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, private agencies were at a stroke relieved from administering public funds for unemployment relief, and with dramatic suddenness large numbers of social workers found themselves transformed from private citizens into public officials. During the "emergency" period this transfer went on without relation to civil service. However, the passage of the Social Security Act in 1935 brought indirect pressure on state governments to revamp their outworn machinery for public assistance. Regular state agencies took over the emergency tasks. In some instances these agencies were already operating under a merit system; and in others new civil service laws were passed which cov-

ered other state staffs. Nor did this pressure stop at the state level. Faced with the responsibility for supervising local administration of relief, state departments began to talk in terms of personnel standards and merit selection for local jurisdictions.

Hesitatingly, scarcely knowing where to begin, professional associations of social workers and their local chapters organized committees on civil service. They approached local and state authorities first on the question of eligibility qualifications; then found themselves drawn into considerations of the much more technical subjects of content of examinations, ratings, and so on. As was inevitable when two groups attempt to work together who are so ignorant of each other's fields as are social workers and civil service specialists, misunderstandings arose and errors were made on both sides. The process of working out solutions acceptable to both is in its inception at the present time.

During the past few years it has been no unusual thing for the Charity Organization Department of the Russell Sage Foundation to receive letters from bewildered social workers who had been called on to take part in giving civil service examinations. What should be standard qualifications for the position of supervisor in a public welfare department? Could the inquirer be sent sets of sample questions which had been used for the position of investigator? Pressure groups sought to secure a statement that "blanketing-in" of present incumbents was correct practice, or that "outsiders" should not be admitted to a given examination.

The pathetic faith which the questioners displayed in the resources of an institution like the Russell Sage Foundation was not in this case justified. We were unable, owing to the lack of any definite studies and non-technical compilations, to give an opinion ourselves or to refer our inquirers to other published sources; too little recorded experience was available from social workers, and the publications concerned with testing processes, while voluminous, were not easy for the layman to comprehend and were besides extremely controversial.

FOREWORD

Discussions with the Civil Service Committee of the New York City Chapter of the American Association of Social Workers resulted in a definite request from that body that the Charity Organization Department of the Foundation attempt to issue a "manual" for the guidance of groups of social workers engaged in studying their local civil service problems, or participating in the processes of selection for social work positions. To undertake this task the Department was fortunate in securing Alice Campbell Klein, whose many years of experience as a worker in the fields of public health and social work, as assistant editor of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, and later as a staff member of the Joint Vocational Service, had familiarized her with general placement problems in social work. In addition, she had recently completed an assignment with the Pennsylvania State Employment Board to work out procedures for oral testing in the course of a comprehensive and statewide civil service examination.

Mrs. Klein began her work in June, 1938, and delivered her completed manuscript in March, 1939. What had been intended originally as a hundred-page pamphlet had necessarily, on account of the complexity of material to be covered, grown into a several-hundred-page book. After first attempting to combine under each chapter heading discussion appropriate to that topic, which would cover both civil service procedure in general, and as applied in particular to selection for public social work positions, Mrs. Klein felt obliged to abandon this method, and, even at the risk of duplication, to present general considerations first and their specific application later. Part One of the present study will therefore be found to constitute a necessarily brief discussion of the development of civil service and the methods used, with some attention to the terminology which has been developed. Part Two is concerned with social work in relation to the technical processes discussed in Part One.

The author was well aware of the difficulties to be anticipated in attempting to give social workers an introduction to civil service.

These difficulties are due partly to the fact that both social work and personnel management are comparatively new professions, and in neither has agreement been reached between professional leaders as to results to be aimed at and techniques to be employed. In order to check her own views and statements, Mrs. Klein submitted her manuscript to a large number of critics, including each member of her Advisory Committee listed on page 3. In general, persons who read and criticized the manuscript represented two groups: social workers who had had some experience in working with merit agencies, and experts who had been responsible for selecting social work personnel. It was not expected that divergence in points of view could be fully resolved, and we wish to emphasize that no member of the Advisory Committee is to be held in any measure responsible for the views herein expressed. For these the author assumes complete responsibility. To members of the Advisory Committee and others, both the author and the Charity Organization Department of the Foundation wish to express sincere gratitude for the time and close attention given to the study, for supplying factual data, and for general and specific advice on the development of the material—advice which, even when the advisers could not reach an agreement, was extremely useful in pointing out the places where the author needed to exercise care and avoid ambiguity.

Throughout the volume Mrs. Klein has stressed the point that she was presenting the first word, and by no means the last word, on what is to social work a new and controversial field. The need for continuous study and experimentation is keenly felt and urgently expressed in the pages that follow. It is hoped that they may stimulate interest, and form as it were a springboard from which the profession of social work may take off in further explorations.

JOANNA C. COLCORD, *Director*
CHARITY ORGANIZATION DEPARTMENT

INTRODUCTION

CIVIL service concerns social workers today because in rapidly increasing numbers they have sought, or will seek, employment in government departments and agencies; and because personnel standards set for these bodies directly affect the caliber of service which social workers in public service can give to their clients, as well as the freedom, opportunity, and security which as public employes they will themselves enjoy. It concerns them because as a profession social work is challenged by civil service commissions for answers to questions about the duties and responsibilities of social work positions and the skills which they demand.

The shift of the burden of relief from private to public auspices, accelerated in the recent period of emergency relief, and culminating in the social security program, has taken place simultaneously with an extension of the civil service movement to new jurisdictions and new areas of government, including that of public welfare. The effect of these concurrent developments is to bring civil service problems into the forefront of the professional social work picture.

Hitherto, social workers, together with other educated socially minded persons, have been concerned about civil service procedures and programs, as they may have been about other good government causes, only in a remote sort of way, as something which they were more or less vaguely "for." Suddenly they are coming to realize that not only considerations of a general social nature, but also professional considerations and even self-interest urgently suggest that vagueness be resolved into alert understanding.

Our mental images of social institutions tend to remain the same long after the institution itself has changed.

The traditional picture of civil service—a roomful of government clerks working in retarded tempo at a job which, barring ac-

cidents, is theirs for life—is only gradually fading from the public mind. The color tone was, at best, undeniably gray; today the picture needs retouching, for the present scene is in more vivid colors.

The actual civil service situation is a challenging one. The country is on the upsurge of a wave of civil service extension as evidenced by new laws passed and pending. New philosophies, ambitions, and techniques are emerging. Whether that wave will roll forward, gathering force as it progresses, or will break and dissipate itself upon reefs of special privilege and the fear of centralized control, will depend in part on how the country feels about the particular administration that was in power during this period of expansion, and in part on how skilfully new merit systems are administered and interpreted to the departments and communities that they serve. Dr. Leonard D. White, of the Department of Political Science of the University of Chicago, stated at the Conference of the American Public Welfare Association in Washington in 1938 that merit systems in state social security programs, recently, and for the most part voluntarily, established, were not only pushing out the boundaries of civil service coverage, but in many ways were also setting new patterns of technique and administration. Since Dr. White's comment was made, it has already become a fact that extension of the merit principle has come about by way of federal provision that personnel for all welfare agencies subsidized by the federal government must be selected through a merit system.

However such a program may be administered, under state or federal auspices, a great extension of federal power has taken place, for unquestionably the administrative branch of the federal government must determine what is and what is not an acceptable merit system. Such a development carried out under the amended Social Security Act in one field of federal-state co-operative effort will no doubt have considerable influence upon the pattern for other federal-state undertakings. The Social Security Board and

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the Children's Bureau have already issued minimum standards now to be maintained in the services that come under their jurisdiction. A unifying and co-ordinating influence will thus be exerted upon the development of state merit systems. The reader is recommended to keep these standards in mind by referring occasionally to the Appendix where they are stated briefly and in official form.

For several reasons, then, it is important that the new picture and the old be considered together as a basis for even lay appraisal of what is permanently desirable; and that major trends and emphases in the organization and technique of voluntary merit systems as well as of legally established civil service commissions be understood.

Another element that both sharpens and re-defines the relation of civil service programs to social work is the fact that a changing philosophy is beginning to animate civil service commissions. Many of these agencies, whose function was formerly negative, restrictive, and policelike, concerned primarily with limiting the abuses of patronage politics, are now gradually becoming modern personnel departments, serving national, state, or local units of government with the positive aim of selecting and developing the best possible personnel for public service. This implies the use of such methods of recruitment, selection, and training for government service as will place and keep qualified personnel in government jobs. It means, or should mean, that the desire of individuals to be permitted unrestricted competition for public jobs, and the demand of employes to be accorded lifelong tenure, must give way to the paramount right of the public to have the best possible service from its government workers.

Such an aim on the part of civil service commissions augurs well for the future of social work programs under government auspices. At the same time it leads civil service commissions to pose embarrassing questions to the profession of social work which the latter is as yet unable to answer: "What qualifications are necessary for a given social work job, and by what objective means have you de-

terminated these? What are the social work skills for which we should test? What records of performance have you against which we may check the validity of our examinations? What is a 'recognized' agency, or an 'accredited' course of training? What are 'equivalents' in training and experience?"

Social work owes a debt to civil service commissions for raising these questions, clarification of which will be timely and useful in public and private social work alike. The process of solution will be slow, and the present situation must be the point of departure. Because of the emergency nature of the problem the danger is that action, or at least recommendation to action, may precede study.

Part One of this book—Civil Service: Its Functions and Procedures—is intended as a "primer" of civil service history and practice. It attempts to indicate some of the reasons why civil service procedures and systems have developed, to touch upon the rate and character of their growth, and to summarize the part which they play in public personnel administration. It does not pretend to give an exhaustive treatment of any one of these subjects; indeed, the writer is conscious that potential subject matter for an entire book is often cursorily treated in a short paragraph. However, she is here in a position similar to that of a civil service examiner who has been "exposed" to social work and attempts a descriptive analysis of case work for other personnel of civil service commissions: to tell more would be presumptuous and would better be left to the specialist; to tell less would give inadequate background against which to understand the interests and purposes of another professional group.

Part Two—Where Social Work and Merit Systems Meet—leaves the field of civil service procedure in its generic aspects and turns to a consideration of those points at which it particularly affects public welfare. This section deals more with controversial aspects, and is necessarily less factual. The large-scale applica-

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tion of merit systems to public social work is so recent that the student is obliged to form and hold only tentative opinions.

The technical field of civil service administration has its schools of thought as has social work. The attempt throughout the book, therefore, has been to present opposing points of view with some of the arguments for each side; not to give personal opinions.

Civil service, again like social work, has its better and poorer agencies, its fuller and more limited programs, its trained and its untrained personnel. No attempt at qualitative evaluation is here made. Probably no one civil service agency exercises all the functions or uses all the techniques described in the following pages. These are all part of the total picture, however, and as such are of interest to the social worker who may encounter any or all of the types presented here.

Reference is more frequently made in this discussion to functions and problems of state civil service agencies than to those of county or municipal commissions. Illustrations of personnel situations in the field of public social work and citations from examinations are drawn chiefly from the public assistance field rather than from the more inclusive field of public welfare.¹ These two emphases occur because of the volume and accessibility of available material; they are not meant to suggest that the work of state merit systems is superior to that done at the local level, nor that it is more important to select personnel by a merit system within the restricted area of public assistance than elsewhere in the public welfare field. Indeed the concern of this volume is with all civil service systems and with public welfare in the broader sense.

It has already been suggested that the whole subject of the ef-

¹ Public welfare is used here as in the 1939 Social Work Year Book article on Public Welfare, by Fred K. Hoehler and Marietta Stevenson. The term "refers to the public tax-supported social work carried on in the United States as a function of federal, state, and local governments," including not only programs for public assistance but those for special groups such as probation, parole, services for the physically and mentally handicapped, visiting teaching and clinical services. (Social Work Year Book 1939, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, p. 347.)

fect of civil service systems on public welfare practice is still in the preliminary stages of discussion and experimental approach. Hence, the purpose of this book will be served if Part One gives the readers background material for a better understanding of civil service as such, and Part Two leads them to fruitful discussions with other social workers, civil service committees, or students of public personnel administration as to what should be professional aims in relation to public personnel administration and how best to achieve them.

Too many acknowledgments are owed for help freely given in preparation of this book to permit complete listing of names in these pages. The Civil Service Committee of the New York Chapter of the American Association of Social Workers originally suggested the project to the Russell Sage Foundation. The members of the Committee have taken a parental interest in the volume, and several of them have criticized the text.

Thanks are due to Miss Joanna C. Colcord, director of the Charity Organization Department of the Russell Sage Foundation, for her recognition of the importance and timeliness of the suggestion and for the sponsorship and critical help which she has given freely throughout its development.

Members of the special Advisory Committee, whose names are listed on page 3, have given invaluable assistance through repeated individual conferences as well as through participation in an all-day session of the Committee. They have freely lent examination questions and have individually read and commented on the manuscript. Miss Colcord, in her Foreword, exempts them from any responsibility for statements on controversial subjects.

Jack Stipe, formerly with the Oregon State Public Welfare Commission, prepared as his student project at the New York School of Social Work a summary of merit regulations affecting state departments of public assistance, and from this the writer has drawn freely.

Mrs. Florence Booth, assistant professor of social work at

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Wayne University, read the manuscript and also made available a preliminary draft of the thesis on Civil Service Procedures for Social Work Positions which she has since submitted as a candidate for an M.A. degree in the Curriculum of Social Work at the University of Michigan. Several references to this study, now in mimeograph form, are made in the following pages.

Others who have read the preliminary draft, thereby helping to shape its final content, are: Albert H. Aronson, Chief of the State Technical Advisory Service of the Social Security Board; Ismar Baruch, Chief of the Classification Division, United States Civil Service Commission; Henry F. Hubbard, of the Federal Council of Personnel Administration; Reuben Horchow, of the Ohio State Civil Service Commission; Donald S. Howard, of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation; and Miss Anita Faatz, of the Maryland Board of State Aid and Charities. Civil service commissions and departmental civil service agencies in several states and cities have been generous with time and material.

To the original Employment Board of the Department of Public Assistance of Pennsylvania, and to Fred Zappolo, its erstwhile executive, particular thanks should be extended not only for the preparation of special material, but for the opportunity of direct contact with civil service procedure—an experience that aroused the writer's interest in the field and helped her, a first-grade pupil, to write a "primer" for next year's entering class.

PART ONE

CIVIL SERVICE: ITS FUNCTIONS
AND PROCEDURES

CHAPTER I

PRECEDENTS AND TENDENCIES IN CIVIL SERVICE

MODERN civil service programs are directed toward two objectives: first, the application of the merit principle to the selection, promotion, and management of personnel in government positions, and the terms under which separation from the job takes place; and, second, the achievement of security of tenure, reasonable working conditions, and adequate compensation for government employes. Were merit systems operating in a vacuum, there might be little more to be said regarding precedents and tendencies. They operate, however, in space that has been filled for centuries with other methods and machinery for controlling appointments and for management of government personnel. These and the motives behind them persist and have their effect on merit system administration.¹ To see the picture as a whole, one must understand the setting in which merit systems are operating and the ways in which the older systems continue to affect the new.

CHANGING POLITICAL CONCEPTS

The merit system of selection was originally introduced to combat the effect of the patronage system, and much that is implied in appointing public personnel on a merit system involves changing deep-seated traditional habits of political thought and action. Does

¹ More than one type of political pressure may affect application of the merit principle. In referring to politics in the selection of health department personnel, William Parr Capes makes the following comment: "Most of us think only of partisan politics, because we hear more about party activities than those of other groups. In addition we have, for example, personal politics, fraternal politics, racial politics, religious politics, and the politics of professions. Political parties are not the only ones which 'play' politics in its reprehensible sense. We have civic organizations, cliques, and professional bodies which do not hesitate to place their selfish interests above those of the public. We have school politics, labor politics, bank politics, insurance politics, and even health politics."—Politics in the Selection of Health Department Personnel, *in* the American Journal of Public Health, vol. 28, July, 1938, p. 835.

this mean, then, that our political party system and appointment by merit are irreconcilable?

Our democratic system of government presupposes the existence of political parties which determine public policies, and which assume responsibility for selection and promotion of candidates, and for all the labor and expense involved in competitive elections. It is difficult to find both workers and money to support the tremendous cost of campaigns. Elected officials and the parties which they represent count among the satisfactions of victory not only the honor of holding office and the remuneration offered in public employment for those elected, but also the opportunity to reward their adherents through appointment to lesser positions, and the chance to throw business patronage to party supporters. The chief opportunities for overt dishonesty in politics come through the last-mentioned practice, which is universally frowned upon and therefore carried on under cover where it exists. The use of appointive positions as rewards to supporters has been in a somewhat different category; it has been considered a necessary and therefore accepted evil of the party system. In the opinion of many reputable citizens complete renunciation by political parties of the control of appointments would be equivalent to giving up party activities, which in turn would render democratic government impossible.

In the opinion of others the strength of a political party should come from the soundness of its political theories and the consistency with which its actions in reference to important political issues reflect its theories. This latter group believe that one of the major benefits of a merit system is that it forces political organizations to depend on their advocacy of political doctrines rather than on their capacity to hand out jobs without regard to merit and fitness. This and other advantages which they believe would come from such liberation from the spoils system are not so widely accepted in America as in England.

In an illuminating article on The British Civil Service, Harold J.

Laski contrasts the fierce opposition to Mr. Gladstone's establishment of the British civil service system in 1870, far more extensive than the American system, with its complete acceptance in Great Britain today. ". . . it is notable, and decisive, that to-day no party in the state would dream for a moment of abandoning the immense advantages which accrue from the abolition of patronage."¹

It is generally recognized in this country, however, that with expansion of public service into many new fields, demand for technically competent public servants is in conflict with tendencies of the spoils system. The merit system is chiefly designed to meet the need for trained, competent workers in government jobs and must therefore necessarily clash at times with the need of democratic government for political party organization in which, as a by-product, public jobs become "coin of the realm." Since democracy and appointment by merit are both desiderata, students of government need to study political systems and merit systems at one and the same time in order to see how far controls may reasonably and fairly be placed on the much older political system to provide for its integration and reconciliation with the merit system of public employment.

Most students of government and civil service agree that under our political party system many positions, particularly those classed as policy-determining, should remain appointive and therefore subject to party control. In such cases, it is contended, the official is elected on the basis of a platform to which he is pledged and for the effective application of which he will be held responsible; therefore he must be free to choose appointees to policy-making positions. Civil service legislation attempts to distinguish between such policy-determining positions and the great body of administrative, technical, and clerical services in government by placing the latter in a category where merit is the basis of appointment and tenure is assured.

¹ *In* the Yale Review, vol. 26, no. 2, December, 1936, p. 348.

While this comparatively new concept of the desirable basis of appointment is accepted by statesmen, using the term in the larger sense, it is neither understood nor accepted by many elected officials. It is not accepted by them because it is not accepted by large blocks of their constituents. One suspects that many elected officials would be glad to be rid of the incubus of the patronage system of appointment as it relates to minor jobs. Nevertheless, that is the system under which they were elected and from which their constituencies expect to secure benefit. With the passage of a civil service law such elected officials are caught between the old system and the new. Even when civil service legislation has been a plank in the party platform, it is perhaps idealistic to expect such officials to yield control of large blocks of appointive positions without some struggle. Elected officials themselves are a well-organized group and are personally skilled in the processes of government; hence they can offer a formidable threat to the smooth working of a civil service system.

Political pressure may be brought against enactment of civil service legislation, or it may take the form of any of the attempted inroads upon existing merit systems discussed in succeeding pages.

This by no means implies that every attempt to thwart or circumvent the workings of a merit system has its basis in political desires or ambitions. Economy, divergent ideas of justice, prior allegiance to other causes, non-political self-interest, ignorance—these and other motives may give rise to action which hampers the civil service agency in carrying out its plans. Such pressures can best be exerted, however, through political channels. Political systems and parties therefore may be either a primary source of interference with merit systems or a tool used by those with non-political objectives.

Civil service commissions are often hampered in free development of their aims and methods by restrictive legislation, or by regulations which it may have been found necessary to impose upon them in order to control attempted abuses of the merit prin-

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ciple. This frequently results in much red tape and other forms of inhibition which seem inexcusable to the layman.

The following statement on this point is quoted from a letter, dated August 16, 1938, from Harry W. Marsh, Personnel Director, State of Connecticut:

. . . the spoils system has persisted through all the years that we have had civil service legislation in this country. It still exists, and it still remains a potent element in the determination of the policies surrounding civil service legislation. In the effort to prevent its operation, the legislation and the policies of administration must be arbitrary, and have the general effect of binding the merit system up with red tape. The administrative agency, in order to fulfil its obligation in preventing the spoils system from operating, may sometimes have to enforce a policy which may, incidentally, prevent the government from obtaining the best possible material.

The answer to all this is to abolish the spoils system. When that is accomplished, methods and policies of administration may be sufficiently liberalized so as to enable us to cut through the red tape, which is now an essential feature of the merit system.

Despite these restrictions, however, the major objective of many civil service agencies today is to administer selection, promotion, transfers, and other personnel functions in such a way that the "cream of the crop" will be attracted to, and remain in, government employ and will be used to maximum efficiency.

CHANGING TERMINOLOGY

It is not possible to go far in a discussion of the merit system without some definition of terms. Civil service, merit systems, career service—all of these phrases had originally a limited and specific meaning, but are becoming almost interchangeable, at least in popular usage. Just what did each of these terms originally connote, through what phases have they gone, and to what extent are they legitimately interchangeable today?¹

¹ Definitions in the literature of this field seem to be notable by their absence or confusion. Therefore an attempt is here made to establish some definitions *de novo*.

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Civil Service. Literally interpreted, and as used commonly in other English-speaking countries, "civil service" means the whole body of persons employed in the non-military executive and administrative branches of government. In the United States the term was originally so used but has since gone through a complicated evolutionary process. Federal reform laws, first passed almost seventy years ago, have been designed to combat the evil of patronage by securing the appointment of certain civil servants on the basis of their qualifications, and protecting the tenure of their positions despite political changes. Under these laws civil service commissions developed a formal procedure for testing the "merit" or qualifications of persons for appointment, which involved pre-determining standards of fitness and devising ways of measuring individual capacities against such a standard.

The term "civil service" was first applied to the legislation establishing the system, and to the officials and commissions administering it. In time it ceased to mean the whole body of public servants, and became limited to those government employees appointed through particular methods established by civil service commissions. By a process of transference it came next to be associated with the processes of selection adopted. Civil service as used in this country today means all these four things; and in addition, a fifth use of the term seems to be emerging to describe the whole system of tenure, compensation, vacations, and other protective provisions which the group of persons employed under civil service regulations have won for themselves. To say that a group has "civil service status" implies not only that its members were appointed through a particular system of selection, but also that they are entitled to the protections and perquisites and are subject to the duties and restrictions which customarily accompany appointment by such method.

The Merit System. The term "merit system" has more recently come into use to describe the kind of personnel program—often voluntarily initiated—that is administered by agencies having the

modern rather than the traditional conception of the fundamental purpose of a civil service system. Its use probably developed both from a need to bring order out of verbal chaos, and also from a desire on the part of its proponents to emphasize the qualitative nature of appointments under a good system of civil service, whether one set up by legislation or by administrative order or regulation. Certain writers who make this distinction in terminology hold that only those systems should be called "merit systems" in which the paramount principle is that of appointment and continuance in office on grounds of merit alone. They point out that some civil service systems are not merit systems, since in them other considerations than merit dictate personnel decisions; that employes sometimes remain in their jobs long after their "merit" to hold them has disappeared. On the other hand, many true merit systems are not civil service systems, since they have neither statutory authorization nor some other adjuncts to a traditional civil service program.

For the purposes of this discussion the terms "civil service" and "merit system" are used interchangeably when reference is made to a system of public personnel management in which selection or other personnel decisions are at least theoretically based on considerations of merit and determined by tests or similar objective procedures.¹ That is to say, no qualitative distinctions are attempted through terminology among public personnel departments or bureaus presumably selecting on the basis of fitness for positions, although differences in quality of program undoubtedly exist.

Common usage also is followed in extending civil service as a descriptive term to refer to examinations and other selective procedures traditionally associated with the programs of civil service commissions, even when these are conducted by personnel depart-

¹ Among recent writers Lewis Meriam apparently upholds this practice. See his *Public Personnel Problems: From the Standpoint of the Operating Officer*, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D. C., 1938, p. 88.

ments which do not carry the label of civil service in their titles. Such public personnel agencies may be central services for all branches of government in a given jurisdiction, or they may exist within a single department. Whether the establishment of a program for the selection of public employes is inclusive or limited, whether it rests on legislative mandate or department volition seems less important in relation to definitions than the general character of the selective process employed. Thus reference is made in the following pages alike to the "civil service examinations" of the United States Civil Service Commission, of the State Department of Personnel in Connecticut, and of the Department of Social Security in the state of Washington.

The term "civil service" relating to agencies is likewise extended herein to cover all agencies, departments, or bureaus which administer the kind of merit program formerly associated only with the work of the traditional civil service commission.

Career Service. Another term much used in discussions of government employment is "career service." Because the term is beginning to be used in connection with some civil service trends, and since it has special implications for the professions, it may be useful to examine its connotation here. Difference of opinion seems to exist as to what the term implies. To some, career service means employment under a type of personnel management that will attract young, able people into a service yielding them continually unfolding opportunity commensurate with developed ability, a service in which the best equipped employes have opportunity and inducement to progress from bottom to top of the ladder.¹

Career service in this sense emphasizes freedom of opportunity.

¹ Career service in this sense is not new, as is evidenced by the presence of persons in positions of major authority in existing government departments who have come up through the ranks. Thus Commissioner Valentine of the New York Police Department and Miss Katharine F. Lenroot, Chief, Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor are career appointees. This subject is discussed further on pp. 98, 101-104, 210-213; with special reference to social work positions, 295-296.

It implies selection on merit, specific preparation for jobs before or after induction into government service, relative permanency of status, some limitation on competition from outsiders in selecting for promotions, promotion based upon fitness rather than solely upon seniority, and usually retirement on pension at an age early enough to keep the avenues of promotion open at the top. Career service so understood is necessarily opposed to strict application of the seniority principle. The basic determinant of personnel decisions under a "career" system is merit, and merit for a particular position is not a constant, since positions and individuals change. This type of career service cannot exist on a base of political shifts; it is not possible with local residence requirements¹ which are a hangover of the political doctrine of "home town jobs for home town boys."

The term "career service" is also used in a narrower sense, implying a more rigid application of the foregoing principles. Advocates of this stricter interpretation believe that the factor of most weight in a number of highly important posts in government service is administrative ability, even though the positions may involve supervision of a technical or professional program carried out by trained personnel. Therefore, say these advocates, if the whole program is geared to that end, these posts should properly be filled by administrators who have come up through the ranks with only such special training in subject matter as they may have received on the job or through a liberal system of leaves of absence for training.² Others feel that the gradual replacement of professionally trained bureau chiefs by an administrative caste which might result from application of this theory would be wasteful and deplorable. The adjustment of these conflicting views

¹ Discussed further on pp. 69-72, 108-109; with reference to public welfare, 233-236.

² The Army and Navy are the most widely known career services in this conception. The career service principle is exemplified in the recruiting, training, and promotional system both for enlisted men and officers in our military and naval services. The Rogers Act (May, 1924) established the career principle, but by no means so completely, in our foreign service.

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probably lies in part in determining how many substantial positions in government service can be properly considered administrative rather than technical. In his recent book¹ already quoted Lewis Meriam suggests that the states offer more opportunity than the federal government for developing an administrative career service. "The staff officers are national officers; the line officers are state officers."² Obviously, the larger number of administrative positions occur in the "line."

Certainly there is something in the idea of career service that strikes a responsive chord in the minds of thoughtful civil service administrators and students of government, and much in modern merit agency programs is predicated on the same principles that underlie the career service idea. To what lengths that idea can be carried is still a moot point.

How far the career service idea is applicable in departments with a social work program will be of increasing interest to social workers as social work under government auspices expands. The answer, in this field as in others, may depend upon how many public welfare positions prove on careful analysis to be technical positions in themselves—carrying unquestionably the need for professionally trained personnel—or purely administrative positions, albeit in a technical area.

Some recent trends in civil service seem to point to an extension of the career principle. Social workers, therefore, whose individual and group fate is becoming interwoven with government and civil service, in order to clarify their own position, need to examine and understand the trend toward career service along with other trends in the history of the development of civil service in the United States.

EMERGING PHILOSOPHY IN CIVIL SERVICE

Along with the spread of the merit principle in government, upward, outward, and downward, there is appearing in certain juris-

¹ Public Personnel Problems, chap. 13.

² *Ibid.*, p. 316.

dictions a change in philosophy regarding the purpose of civil service agencies. Although their protective function still does and should exist, certainly as long as the "spoils" system is a primary tool of political administration, civil service agencies here and there no longer aim only to arrange fair competition for positions and relative permanency of tenure to the winners, but go farther in attempting to seek out the best available personnel for government service, and to stress the use of measures best adapted to bringing these persons to the top of each eligible list.¹

The conception of function that a civil service agency holds, or that the community holds for it, influences its procedures. If the old-line protective function is uppermost, secrecy about its operations is often carried to extremes. If specialists are consulted by the commission, the consultation is sometimes almost under cover of darkness because of anticipated dangers of leakage or collusion. Entrance qualifications are apt to be low, on the theory that every citizen has a right to compete for public positions. Eligible lists once established tend to remain in existence long after the cream has been skimmed off, on the presumption that those who have once established eligibility have a prior right to appointment over a new group, possibly better qualified.² The appointing officer often has little or no choice of appointment, but by rule or by precedent must take the top man. Dismissals are possible only on proof of extreme misconduct. The tendency to adhere rigidly to local residence restrictions is found even when the law allows some leeway, and regardless of the shortage of local qualified personnel.

If, on the other hand, the major purpose of the agency administering the merit program is to give a high standard of personnel service to operating departments, this aim will tend to be reflected in its procedures. The greatest possible use will be made of pro-

¹ For definition of eligible lists or registers, see footnote, p. 89.

² Eligible lists, however, may also remain active too long for other more defensible reasons, such as lack of funds for conducting a new examination.

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fessional services in consultation. Entrance qualifications will be realistically related to demands of the position on the theory that the public has a right to able service, and that demonstration of ability in past service is the best basis for prognosis of ability in future service. Eligible lists will tend to be relatively short-lived so that only the best shall be appointed. The privileges of probationary, provisional, and temporary appointment will not be abused. Appointing officers will often have some latitude in selection from a superior group. Local residence restrictions, if they exist, will be waived so far as permissible in case local recruits do not include persons of superior qualifications in terms of a specific job. Separations from service and demotions will be on the basis of lack of efficiency as well as for superannuation or misconduct. Research, as a necessary way of evaluating the effectiveness of the work of selection and personnel management, will be an integral part of the merit program—again, so far as is possible within budgetary limits.

CHAPTER II

GROWTH OF THE MERIT SYSTEM IN THE UNITED STATES

THE rise and extension of federal and state civil service systems in this country have taken place in three great waves, and almost in twenty-five-year cycles. The impetus to the first wave was given by the assassination of President Garfield in 1881 by a disappointed office seeker. The motive was said to have been revenge. The catastrophe dramatized to the country the evils of a nationwide system of appointing to government office on a basis of political patronage. The tragedy undoubtedly strengthened a civil service reform movement already initiated.

FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION

The National Civil Service Reform League was organized in 1881. The Pendleton Act, establishing a Federal Civil Service Commission, was passed in January, 1883, and the first great extension of the civil service took place during the two administrations of President Cleveland. Since then it has been extended by each of our presidents—by some more than by others—but even the Executive Orders of 1938, to say nothing of the marked increases in civil service coverage which took place under Theodore Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson, did not increase proportionately the number of federal employes under civil service through the period of great expansion of federal departments.

Among the states, New York¹ and Massachusetts followed closely the federal government by enactment of legislation establishing state commissions in 1883 and 1884, respectively. A pause followed this early activity.

¹ The New York Commission, and the California, Colorado, and Ohio Commissions later referred to are supported by constitutional amendment.

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Between 1905 and 1915 there occurred a major increase in the regulatory powers of government through the passage of new and important legislation.¹ With this increase in powers, and therefore in complexity of government, came a second wave of civil service reform and extension. During the administrations of the three presidents mentioned above, over 200,000 positions were added to the classified lists in the federal service,² but in spite of this gain federal coverage was then, and still is, incomplete. The assumption of new regulatory responsibilities characterized state governments as well as the government at Washington. State laws for civil service again found acceptance: Wisconsin and Illinois passed civil service laws in 1905, Colorado in 1907, New Jersey in 1908, Ohio, California, and Connecticut in 1913, and Kansas in 1915.

Another lull followed this expansion, and among the states, with the single exception of Maryland, which established its Department of Employment and Registration in 1920, no further additions to civil service coverage were made until 1936. In the meantime, however, the Connecticut law was repealed and the Kansas law became inoperative owing to lack of funds.

Beginning with 1933 there has occurred another extension of government powers, and again, perhaps partly as a result, there is found another simultaneous widening of the civil service front. The extension of government powers this time occurred largely in agencies having to do with increase in personal security for the individual—FERA, NLRB, FHA, WPA, AAA, HOLC, SSB, and the rest of the alphabetical roll.

Complexity of government, together with new techniques in

¹ This included in the federal government such legislation as the various acts by which the powers of the Interstate Commerce Commission were broadened, including the Hepburn Act of 1906 and the Mann-Elkins Act of 1910; the law creating the Children's Bureau in the Department of Labor in 1912; the Federal Reserve Act of 1913; the Federal Trade Commission Act of 1914; and others.

² "Classified lists" and "classified service" refer to those positions to which appointment is made on the basis of competitive examinations.

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business administration, public administration, and personnel administration, have resulted in proposals for reorganization of the federal civil service and have also influenced the growth of civil service among the several states. Executive Orders Nos. 7915 and 7916, issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, June 24, 1938, mark perhaps the most comprehensive single step of any hitherto affecting the federal civil service.¹ Employees in the classified service of the executive branch of the federal government as of June 30, 1939, are listed as 622,832 in comparison with 532,073 on June 30, 1937; employees in the unclassified service for the same dates numbered 297,478 and 309,591, respectively. The per cent of coverage in the classified service for June 30, 1939, showed 67.7 per cent as compared with 63.2 per cent on June 30, 1937. An analysis of the figures on these two dates for individual departments and agencies indicates that approximately 22,000 positions were brought into the classified service directly as a result of Executive Order No. 7916. This, however, is not considered to be a final figure.²

On this third wave of interest in civil service, which has perhaps not yet spent its force, several states have joined the ranks of those having statewide civil service systems. In 1936 Kentucky's Reorganization Act set up in its Finance Department a personnel division that has some characteristics of a civil service system. In 1937 Connecticut re-enacted civil service legislation, and Arkansas, Tennessee, Maine, and Michigan also established state commissions or personnel departments.

The year 1939 started off badly with the repeal of the two-year-old Arkansas law, but other states joined the roll of those with statewide civil service commissions. Alabama, Rhode Island, and Minnesota have adopted new civil service laws covering the majority of administrative personnel in these states. A new state law

¹ For a description of the methods of inclusion, see p. 121.

² Information from the United States Civil Service Commission, September 29, 1939.

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has also been adopted in New Mexico, but it applies only to employes of state institutions, the state police service, and the Port of Entry Board.¹ Hawaii passed a civil service law applying to the government of the Territory and to the four largest of the five counties.

In addition, legislatures in 1939 considered merit system proposals for either state or local government in the following 17 states: Arizona, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Vermont, and Washington.

Besides the establishment of the new legislation just mentioned, legislation for reorganization of existing state civil service systems was enacted in Massachusetts, Michigan, and Tennessee. The new Massachusetts law is thought to be an improvement on the old. It substitutes a civil service agency under the direction of a five-member commission and a personnel director for the former full-time administrative commission. The new commission will have advisory and quasi-legislative and quasi-judicial powers, and the personnel director will be in charge of the administrative and technical functions of the civil service agency. In Michigan, on the other hand, the new law is generally felt to be a backward step. In addition to enlarging the three-member civil service commission to four members, it removed additional groups of state employes from the workings of the merit system, putting them in the unclassified service.² The classified service in Michigan now includes only about 9,000 employes out of a total of about 17,500. The new Tennessee law provides for the establishment of a civil service

¹ In referring in the following pages to the 17 states which have civil service agencies in the formal sense, Arkansas, Kansas, and Kentucky are omitted. The Arkansas law has been repealed. The Kansas law is not operative. The Kentucky merit system lacks some of the characteristics common to the merit systems of other formally established statewide civil service agencies, and is not classified as a civil service agency in other studies. Alabama, Minnesota, New Mexico, and Rhode Island, the states added to the roll in 1939 at the time of going to press, are included.

² Information about these recent changes from the Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada and the Civil Service Reform Association.

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department under a five-member commission and a personnel director. In general, it represents a strengthening of the merit system legislation formerly in effect. Civil service coverage in New York State will be increased without legislative change through Governor Lehman's order, promulgated in October, 1939, that state employes in non-competitive positions, numbering about 15,000, be blanketed-in under civil service as speedily and completely as possible.

There is other evidence of increased popular support of the civil service movement. Endorsement of civil service, previously made by the National Civil Service Reform League, the National League of Women Voters, and the United States Junior Chamber of Commerce, was given support in 1938 by the American Bar Association, the National Lawyers' Guild, the American Federation of Labor, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, and the Daughters of the American Revolution, as well as by professional governmental groups.¹

COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL LEGISLATION

While this discussion is chiefly concerned with state merit systems as being fewer in number and more comparable than are county and municipal merit systems, the spread of the latter should be noted also. According to a census published by the Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada in 1938 and giving figures for 1937, only 169 of 3,053 counties in the country were under merit systems. Alabama and Florida have since added one county each. In contrast to this dark picture, it is cheering to note that (as of the same date) 439 cities maintained their own merit system. An additional 235 cities and villages had some form of civil service administered by an outside agency. In Massachusetts the State Civil Service Commission administers the local merit system for cities. In New York the Commission exercises some

¹ News Bulletin of the Public Administration Clearing House, Chicago, January, 1939, p. 3. Release no. 2.

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degree of supervisory control over the city system. In New Jersey the State Civil Service Commission administers the local merit systems of counties and cities that adopt by referendum the provisions of a state law providing civil service for municipalities. It is safe to say that in 1939 at least 750 cities have all or part of their administrative employes under formal merit systems. Some municipal civil service systems are limited to the members of the police and fire departments. The civil service laws in Alabama, Minnesota, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Tennessee authorize the state personnel agencies to perform on a cost basis technical services for local governments adopting merit systems.¹ The great increase in municipal civil service agencies began with the second wave of general spread of civil service in 1908 and has been rapid and steady ever since.

DEPARTMENTAL SYSTEMS

In the last two or three years the civil service principle has been adopted by special departments and combinations of departments in states which have not enacted statewide civil service systems covering all executive departments. This extension has been effected either through passage of laws creating or reorganizing such departments, or by administrative decision. The greatest expansion of the merit principle along departmental lines has come in connection with the Social Security Act, notably in departments administering unemployment compensation and public assistance.

The argument for a merit basis of selection for departments administering relief to those in distress seems one that intelligent politicians cannot deny. Even the more patronage-minded realize that mixing politics and relief may be a political boomerang and something that a long-suffering public will no longer tolerate.

The Social Security Act as originally passed by Congress (August 14, 1935) affected the administration of public assistance by

¹ Correspondence with the Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada, August 21, 1939.

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placing three responsibilities under the Public Assistance Division of the Social Security Board:

Old-age Assistance (but not Old-age Benefits, which fall under the Insurance Division of the Board)

Aid to Dependent Children

Aid to the Blind

The Children's Bureau was also made responsible for three services:

Maternal and Child Health Services

Child Welfare Services

Services for Crippled Children

The Act vested no specific authority in the Social Security Board or in the Children's Bureau to control or set personnel standards for the states. These agencies were, however, charged with responsibility for seeing that the Act was efficiently administered. Since good personnel is indispensable to good administration, the Board was able to influence personnel standards in that it required that state plans should include acceptable, objective minimum standards for administrative personnel.

At the 1939 session Congress amended the Social Security Act¹ to provide that, as a condition of receiving federal grants-in-aid under certain titles of the Act concerned with the services just mentioned and some others, state agencies should establish personnel standards on a merit basis for the employees of such agencies. These standards are to be established by January 1, 1940, and are to be maintained thereafter.

The amendment does not change the fact that neither the Social Security Board nor the Children's Bureau exercises any authority as regards actual selection, compensation, and tenure of office of any individual state or local employee, provided that such individual is employed in conformity with the agency's merit system.

¹ Public No. 379, 76th Congress, 1st Session.

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The standards required by the amended provisions of the Act were issued by the Social Security Board in November, 1939.¹ They prescribe primarily that a merit system of personnel administration cover all employes, both state and local, engaged in programs financed in part by federal funds under the titles administered by the Board, except that, at the option of the state agencies, certain types of positions, including commissions, advisory councils, state and local boards, executive heads of state departments, their confidential secretaries, and attorneys serving as legal counsel may be exempted. In connection with the adoption of these standards, the Board declared: "Proper and efficient administration requires clear definition of functions and assignment of responsibilities, the employment of the most competent available personnel, and the development of staff morale and individual efficiency."² The merit-plan standards being issued to the states offer many optional procedures. In a general way they follow the accepted standards of federal and state civil service systems.

The state merit system regulations, to conform with the standards, must bar employes from participating in political activities except to express their views and cast their ballots as citizens. They also are to prohibit disqualification of persons from taking examinations or holding office because of political or religious opinions. State agencies are also required to prepare, adopt, install, and administer classification and compensation plans for all positions in the agency, such plans to be based upon investigation and analysis of the duties and responsibilities of each position. According to the standards announced by the Board, the state regulations governing the administration of examinations are to include among other things the provision that examinations for entrance to the service are to be conducted on an open competitive basis, with

¹ See Appendix: Standards for a Merit System of Personnel Administration in State Employment Security and State Public Assistance Agencies. A similar statement of standards has been issued by the Children's Bureau.

² *Ibid.*

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adequate publicity, and with a reasonable period for filing applications; that examinations are to be practical in nature, constructed to reveal the capacity of the applicant for the position for which he is competing and his general background and related knowledge, and are to be rated objectively. Examinations, furthermore, are to be suitably adapted to the requirements of the position and accordingly may be in written or oral form, a performance test, or a combination of these types. Unassembled examinations for scientific or professional positions will be allowed.

If the state agency wishes, its rules may provide that incumbents of positions at the time of the issuance of the standards may be given preference in the examinations to the extent of a waiver of minimum requirements of education and experience for admission to the examinations, and of retention if they receive a mere passing mark in the examination.

Vacancies are to be filled whenever practicable by promotion of a qualified permanent employe of the administrative agency upon recommendation by the agency head. It is stated by the Board that the application of the standards "will promote a career service." A system of service ratings is to be maintained. Removal of permanent employes may take place only for cause, or for reasons of curtailment of work or lack of funds. In the event of removal permanent employes will have the right of appeal to an impartial body through an established procedure provided for in the merit system.

A state in which no statewide civil service system operates must establish a merit system and a "Merit System Council," the latter an impartial body appointed by the administrative agencies or by the governor on recommendation of such agencies, whose duty it will be to administer the merit system. The Board will make available to all states a technical consultative service.

Looking explicitly at departmental programs of public assistance as a matter of direct concern to social workers, we find that, to date, in addition to the 17 states already mentioned which have

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state civil service agencies serving many or all state departments,¹ there are seven states in which one or more state departments handling some or all phases of public assistance are given specific legislative authorization to set up a merit system for the selection and retention of personnel. These are Arizona, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Montana, Pennsylvania, and Washington. In all except Idaho, examinations have already been given for some or all phases of public assistance.

In Idaho, although the law specifically provides for "selection . . . on the basis of open competitive merit examinations," the provisions were interpreted as "permissive" by the State Attorney-General and no examinations have been given. In place of them, employes are selected by a committee on the basis of pre-established minimum qualifications.

In 18 states the law contains a general authorization to one or more state departments handling public assistance to set personnel standards, but does not definitely specify the application of the merit system of selection. These are Arkansas,² Delaware, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico,³ North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

In West Virginia the State Department has used the general legal authorization to set standards as the basis for a system of competitive merit examinations for certain county positions. In two states, Delaware and Nevada, the general legislative authorization does not seem to have been translated into any application of the merit principle in re-

¹ Data in the following pages on merit plans affecting state departments of public assistance are taken from *The Merit Principle in Selection of Public Welfare Personnel*, an unpublished student project by Jack Stipe, New York School of Social Work, August, 1938.

² For a time selection of personnel in the Arkansas Department of Public Welfare was affected by the state civil service law. Since the repeal of that law (see p. 43) the method of appointment has been controlled by the rather general provisions on personnel in Act 280, Senate Bill 493 of the Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Arkansas for 1939.

³ New Mexico is included in this group, as well as in the first group of 17 states with civil service systems, because its state civil service law does not apply to public welfare employes except as they may be in public institutions.

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lation to public assistance. In the fifteen other states, the departments handling public assistance have set minimum qualifications for some or all positions, and in one or two of these, notably Oklahoma and South Dakota, are working on certain other phases of the merit system. There is great variety among these states, as might be expected, in level of qualifications set, number of positions for which any qualifications have been written, and degree to which they are regarded in making appointments.

In many of the states mentioned, however, the general charge to set standards has resulted in plans at least for the development of a merit system of selection and in a few instances such systems have been adopted and examinations given. In some cases departments concerned see the need to establish such a system and are willing to begin, but have no money to finance examinations.

In the following seven states where there is little or no legislative authorization concerning the personnel of the operating departments in public assistance, two have voluntarily established a merit system of selection and have conducted civil service examinations. These states are Florida, Kentucky, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oregon, and Vermont.

Despite the fact that the law does not definitely specify that the merit principle shall be followed in making appointments in these states, in Florida and Nebraska the state department handling public assistance has developed an examination system for certain positions, and three more—Missouri, North Carolina, and Oregon—have established minimum qualifications for certain classes of positions. In Vermont selection is on an individual basis. Kentucky is in a class by itself, since, while the law establishing the Kentucky Department of Public Welfare does not specify selection on a merit basis, the state government as a whole is served by a Bureau of Personnel Efficiency which, although it does not use competitive examinations, has certain functions and uses certain methods commonly associated with merit systems.

From a survey of the methods of personnel selection in public welfare departments in states where there is no state civil service commission, it seems that the degree of development of the merit

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plan for public assistance bears little relation to the degree of legal authorization given the department to establish such a plan.

So far as personnel is concerned, the law in Florida, for example, gives the State Board of Public Welfare only the authorization to "hire its own employes, prescribe their duties and fix their salaries." The Board, however, has translated this minimum legislative authorization into permission to conduct an examination program.

In South Carolina, on the other hand, where the law specifically states that the selection of personnel "shall be entirely upon the qualifications and merit of the individuals," for lack of funds no examination procedure has been installed.

All gradations, however, in the authority and extent of civil service administrations concerned with departments of public assistance have now lost most of their significance, for as indicated, the Social Security Board will now require that state welfare agencies must establish at least minimum personnel standards on a merit basis, in order to be eligible for federal funds.

DEGREE TO WHICH STATE SYSTEMS AFFECT LOCAL PUBLIC WELFARE PERSONNEL

This summary of the spread of merit plans affecting public assistance in the several states omits the method of selection of local personnel. What is the coverage of merit plans in relation to the local picture?

Since in most states the majority of public assistance personnel is employed by local units of government, to enumerate states in which there is some type of state merit plan for selection of public welfare personnel really gives no picture of the coverage of the merit plan for total personnel of the statewide public assistance program. The most careful scanning of the many state-local civil service and public assistance variables in each state picture would be necessary to arrive at an answer to this question.

The degree to which a state merit plan affecting public assistance personnel carries beyond the state staff depends upon a num-

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ber of factors; the pattern is a different one for each state. Among the determinants are the extent to which a state civil service law affects counties and cities; and to what extent and in relation to what factors state public assistance departments control local programs.

Certain more or less autonomous local public assistance departments may come under a merit plan independently of the state situation if the county or municipality concerned has a local civil service commission which selects personnel in some or in all branches of local government.

Beyond the narrow confines of public assistance, there is the larger area of public welfare.¹ Some public welfare positions were under civil service before the recent increase in government services in that part of public welfare termed public assistance. Some were outside civil service control, and still are. A summary of the extension of merit systems to public assistance is only a partial picture of the situation in relation to public welfare.

CIVIL SERVICE AND UNIONISM

Inefficiency resulting from patronage appointments, the growing complexity of government, and an increased knowledge about techniques² have been mentioned as factors contributing to the spread of civil service. Another factor has been the influence of trade unionism.

Unionism in the federal civil service has a history of nearly a hundred years. In the civil services of the respective states it is younger, but still is well established. Some objectives of proponents of civil service legislation coincide with the objectives of organized labor—those objectives which concern standardization and improvement of working conditions and protection of tenure.

¹ See footnote, p. 23.

² The industrial and governmental personnel field owes a great debt to the Army Alpha tests and to the field of education for the development of testing techniques which have been adapted to the needs of such personnel administration.

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Unions have stood rather generally for the establishment of civil service legislation, and once it is established, have helped to protect certain aspects of it.

Recent changes in the union field—the shift from the craft to the industrial form, the spread of unionism to “white collar” employes, and complete acceptance by government of the desirability of collective bargaining—have given new impetus to organizations of public employes and have strengthened identity of interest between labor unions in government service and labor unions in industry. Government service, particularly in the “New Deal” agencies, has had rapid growth. Where there is rapid growth there is need for standardization and therefore a fertile field for union effort. Organized labor of late has used the public welfare field in particular to strengthen its ranks, to promote understanding of identity of interest between government and industrial employes, and to extend civil service protection to public servants.

The influence of the local labor union within the relief agency, and of the more powerful parent groups behind it with which it is affiliated, has been a strong new force in advancing the spread of civil service coverage in certain jurisdictions. In New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia, especially, have local chapters of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees waged long and valiant battle, both alone and in co-operation with other interested groups, in securing a merit system of selection. A share of the credit for securing and extending civil service coverage for public welfare employes in the states concerned must be given to the effectiveness of their legislative campaigns.¹

¹ The influence of unions on civil service systems has not been entirely in the direction of strengthening the merit principle. For discussion of this point, see pp. 65–67. Questions involving organized labor and the social worker are considered on pp. 242–248.

CHAPTER III

COMMON FORMS OF INROAD UPON MERIT SYSTEMS

THE preceding chapter has dealt with the growth of civil service and some of the forces active in promoting it. But as previously noted, civil service has not developed in a vacuum but in a setting in which government positions were traditionally "coin of the realm," and has therefore had to develop against opposing forces. It has been open to attack and inroads from all sides.

Before going on to examine forms of civil service organization and the techniques which civil service agencies are using, it is worth while to examine the forms which these inroads take. They are brought together for consideration here in order to give a bird's-eye view of the problems faced in trying to push forward the merit system of personnel selection and management. Most attempted inroads fall into the following six groups:

1. Inadequate appropriations
2. Exemption of too many positions from the merit principle of appointment
3. Preferences accorded to special groups of potential or actual competitors
4. Restriction of appointments to residents of a particular locality
5. Neglect or deliberate disregard of merit rules in selection and appointment
6. Tendency to include financial need of candidates along with ability as basis for personnel decisions

Looking at these inroads one by one, what forms do they take, and how are they to be recognized?

INADEQUATE APPROPRIATIONS

Budgets for agencies charged with developing a merit system may be inadequate to the point where funds are non-existent and

the agency is in fact inoperative or greatly circumscribed in program. Appropriations for a merit system may be deflected to other purposes with deliberate intent to defeat the application of the merit principle.¹

A particularly blatant effort of this sort was made in Arkansas by the House of Representatives in a special session in 1938.² It was fortunately defeated by the Senate at that time, although since that date the whole law has been repealed.

Arkansas had passed a statewide civil service law in 1937. Pressure was brought upon the Governor by its opponents to include the subject of repeal of this nine-month-old institution in his call for a special session in the spring of 1938. The Governor refused. Since the subject was not included in the call, it could not be considered on the calendar. The House promptly solved the difficulty by amending a bill creating a \$1,000,000 tuberculosis sanatorium expansion fund (which *was* included in the call) to provide that \$11,800 which had previously been appropriated to the Civil Service Commission and constituted its entire budget, be transferred to the sanatorium fund. This would have hamstrung the Civil Service Commission very effectively. The Senate was unanimous in rejecting the amended bill.

Budgets may be too low to permit giving examinations. Appropriations for personnel administration may seem large to the uninitiated but still be inadequate to the size of the administrative task. There is evidence that nearly all civil service agencies are under-budgeted. Ten dollars a year for each classified employe is sometimes cited as a reasonable amount for personnel administration.³ This figure may be a rough guide to those who are

¹ *In Mind Your Business*, published May 29, 1930 (no. 80), by the St. Louis Bureau of Municipal Research, it is stated that appropriations for the public personnel agency in the City of St. Louis were cut in 1930 from \$29,739 to \$3,739. The writer comments that the evidence looks as though this action were a form of recrimination by disappointed political factions.

² Arkansas Senate Votes to Retain Civil Service System, *in* *Good Government*, vol. 55, no. 2, March-April, 1938, p. 22.

³ The Civil Service Assembly News Letter of June, 1937 (vol. 3, no. 6, p. 5) reports a study of personnel costs by J. E. Walters, professor of personnel administration at Purdue University, which estimates that while industrial personnel management costs amount to an average of \$14.06 per employe per year, the average public personnel agency receives an average of \$5.50 per classified employe per year. The Civil Service Assembly itself generally recommends a

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weighing the adequacy of proposed budgets. Size of budgets bears a direct relation to the agency's ability to use some of the more expensive forms of examinations, to conduct a research program, to call specialists in the various fields to its staff, and to seek expert compensated guidance from outside.

One method of producing revenue for examining agencies is by charging candidates a fee for filing applications. This system at once reduces the number of applicants and provides income which varies with the number to be examined.

The Municipal Civil Service Commission of New York City derives an income of approximately \$250,000 annually from this source, or 60 per cent of its budget. Fees charged run from \$1.00 to \$3.00, or approximately one-tenth of one per cent of the entrance salary for the position for which application is made. Only a few public personnel agencies follow this plan. The Jefferson County Personnel Board in Alabama charges a flat fee of \$1.50 for registration for all examinations; the Civil Service Commission of Seattle, Washington, charges \$1.00 for original applications for all examinations except those for positions in the labor class; in Toledo, Ohio, \$1.00 is the flat charge for all examinations, while applicants for state positions in Ohio pay an application fee of \$1.00 for positions with salary of \$1,000 or more, and 50 cents for positions with salary between \$600 and \$1,000.¹

The merit principle may be defeated not only by inadequate appropriations for the civil service agency itself but also by reduction of salaries for any position or group of positions under the agency's jurisdiction to the point where qualified persons will not compete for or accept them.

EXEMPTION OF POSITIONS

Another frequently recurring form of attack on the principle of appointment by merit is the constant pressure to exempt new or

minimum annual appropriation of \$10 per classified employe for the administration of a well-rounded program (the latter information from a letter of March 8, 1939, from the Assembly).

¹ News Bulletin of Public Administration Clearing House, Chicago, January 24, 1939. Release no. 2.

important positions from civil service control. In certain types of positions, particularly those whose occupants are responsible for developing policies, such exemption, it has already been said, is traditional, and can be defended. The question is how far down the line does policy-determination go? Commissioners, department heads, bureau chiefs, deputies, supervisors, technicians—if one wishes, one can build an argument for exemption all the way down the line of supervisory authority.¹

Since exemptions for special positions have a way of leading to further exemptions, each new request is likely to be regarded critically by civil service agencies. The modern tendency is to exempt only heads of major departments, their deputies, and confidential secretaries so far as any hierarchical distinction is concerned. Courts, administrators of operating departments, and communities do not always uphold this limitation.

Other groups traditionally exempted are the military service, elected officials, staffs of legislative and judicial branches,² and superintendents, wardens, and inmate help in public institutions. Arguments for allowing all of the above are not equally clear. No justification is needed for the first two, but one might question why a substantial share of personnel of legislative and judicial departments might not be included in the classified service. Since many staff members of such departments are lawyers, their exemption may have something to do with the fact that courts too are composed of lawyers, and courts have great influence on civil service policies. There would appear to be no more compelling reason why wardens and superintendents of institutions should be exempt from the merit principle of appointment than should other public officials who carry administrative responsibility. In general, they are further removed from policy-determination than many officials in other posts commonly included in the classified service. In fact, it would seem that those particular jobs should be as far removed

¹ See p. 48 and Appendix.

² See footnote one, p. 117 for an example of legal positions which are "exempt."

as possible from the patronage system of appointment for reasons of public safety and economy.

Occasionally new departments are exempted in toto from merit regulations. This was the case until recently in many federal, state, and local "New Deal" agencies. Motives for such exemption may be mixed, some being worthier of consideration than others. It is admittedly hard to meet any mushroom-like staff increase through an examination procedure. Not only is the element of time involved in setting up examinations, but while things are in an embryonic state the basis of examination cannot be definitely determined. Anyone employed in a public department in the earlier days of FERA, WPA, or even the more recent Social Security program recalls how content of jobs, lines of administrative control, and procedures of all kinds changed over night. To standardize under civil service in such times of flux may be impractical. Moreover, civil service legislation is likely to bring with it restrictions on age, marital status, residence, and similar points which may unreasonably hamper the flexibility of a new department, especially if demand for a qualified staff exceeds supply. However, should the bill setting up a new function of government exempt positions from civil service control and conclude with some variation of the ominous phrase, "all appointments above \$5,000 are subject to the approval of the Senate," these signs should be sufficient to indicate an aggressive attack upon the merit principle.

The term "political clearance" is used to describe a negative type of party control over appointments. This occurs when it is accepted practice for the head of a department to submit to party representatives for approval the names of desired appointees. The department head is not forced to accept persons nominated by party representatives; on the other hand, he is not free to appoint those whom they reject.

The limitations imposed by these intrusions of the patronage system may be more hampering than any merit regulations could possibly be. In setting up new government services it would seem

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desirable to leave initial appointments to administrative decision, having blocked off avenues of political control, and to write in a definite provision that new staff should come under a merit regime when the civil service agency and those with administrative responsibility for the departmental program agree that the time is ripe for such action. Since inducting the staff of a whole department into civil service status is likely to involve an upheaval quite naturally dreaded by administrators, some safeguards are perhaps necessary to ensure that such induction is not postponed beyond a reasonable period.

Interpretations of coverage of a civil service law may be manipulated so as to exempt certain positions from civil service regulations. What, for example, are "state" positions; do they include positions in counties to which appointments are made, approved, financed, or supervised by the state? The answer to such a question may decide whether a particular position is to be filled by political appointment or through the state civil service commission.

Such a question once arose in connection with the ill-fated Arkansas Civil Service Law.

Civil service examinations were given for the position of county director of public welfare. A former county director on the eligible list was passed over in favor of an appointee not on the list. The Arkansas Chapter of the American Association of Social Workers assisted its aggrieved member to appeal the decision; but the Attorney General ruled that county directors were not state employes and therefore appointments to the position need not be made from the lists established by the Civil Service Commission. His decision was rescinded in Chancery Court. An appeal was taken to the State Supreme Court which handed down the unanimous decision that county welfare directors were state employes and as such subject to provisions of the Civil Service Act of 1937.¹

PREFERENCE FOR SPECIAL GROUPS

Giving preference to particular groups asking for special con-

¹ The Compass, vol. 19, no. 5, February, 1938, p. 21; and vol. 19, no. 9, June, 1938, p. 8.

sideration may cut at the very heart of the merit principle. Special interest groups, however, are not all villains and some of their claims meet with general public acceptance. It behooves those interested in the merit principle, therefore, to consider claims to special preference, and to determine which are based on tenable, even though self-interested, grounds, and which are clearly unreasonable.

Two groups, both articulate and well organized in pressing for special privilege under civil service legislation or administration, are veterans, and incumbents of public offices. These groups are not necessarily mutually exclusive and may combine forces or may join with other outside pressure groups to achieve their special objectives.

*Veteran Preference.*¹ Legislation for veteran preference in this country antedates civil service legislation, and is no new phenomenon. Pressure for special consideration for veterans has always created a serious financial problem for government through enactment of the various pension provisions. It has resulted in a numerically serious problem for civil service systems only since the World War. Veteran preference in appointments is recognized in one form or another in many states as well as in the federal government. Amount and kind of preference accorded, interpretation of who is a veteran, and the effect that such legislation has had on appointments vary greatly from state to state.

In 1935 twenty-four states and the federal government had some form of post-war veteran preference in appointments. Approximately three-fourths of all civil service systems operating throughout the country were affected by veteran preference laws at that time.²

¹ Discussed further on pp. 107-108, 162, 293.

² The subject of veteran preference is treated exhaustively in Monograph no. 10 on Veteran Preference in the Public Service, by John F. Miller, to which the reader is referred and from which many of the data here cited are taken. This is one of a series of monographs on Problems of the American Public Service, which is part of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Public Service Personnel. McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York, 1935.

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The regions in which state legislation establishing veteran preference had not then been passed were the deep South, with the exception of South Carolina; northern New England; a group of five Rocky Mountain states; and Nebraska, Delaware, and West Virginia.

Those interested in furthering sound application of the merit system in government must recognize the variety of forms in which veteran preference may be expressed, and decide for themselves which forms of such preference are most destructive of the merit idea and which represent a less harmful concession to a powerful group.

The term "veteran" covers many categories not commonly thought of as so definable. In addition to those honorably discharged from the naval, military, and marine forces, the United States Civil Service Commission includes as "veterans" a score of other groups—among which are cadets of the United States Military Academy and the Coast Guard Service, certain members of the Lighthouse Service, Philippine scouts, certain pay clerks, those honorably discharged from draft, and certain persons who formerly served as enlisted men or officers in the Revenue Cutter Service.¹

Veteran preference takes a variety of forms. It sometimes appears in legislation written primarily for the purpose of establishing preference, sometimes in statutes creating merit systems, new departments, or new positions. The best known type of veteran preference is the advantage given to veterans in computing scores in civil service examinations or thereafter in making appointments. Preference of this type may run all the way from giving preference to veterans over non-veterans in the event of "tie" scores or of adding a modest five points to the total examination score of disabled veterans with honorable discharge, up to total waiving of

¹ See U. S. Civil Service Commission Veteran Preference, Form 1481, June, 1938, pp. 2-3. These inclusions are made by the Commission in conformity with the Veteran Preference Act of July, 1919, and interpretations.

examinations for veterans of the Civil War,¹ as in Massachusetts. While at this late date the Massachusetts provision creates no great problem, it has done so in the past and it shows the extremes to which such legislation can go. Examination preference may be confined to those who have been disabled, or it may apply to all veterans, and even to widows of all veterans and wives of disabled veterans.

Two forms of advantage given in examination seem particularly pernicious. In the jurisdiction of some commissions, the provision is found that if a veteran passes an examination he goes to the top of the eligible list and must be preferred for appointment. In others, a definite number of points is added to the examination scores of veterans regardless of whether or not a passing grade has been attained. If these advantages were combined, a veteran whose score was as much as 20 points below the passing score might nevertheless be carried above it by the addition of his special preference points;² and once on the list, might automatically go to the top and receive appointment. This is not an imagined evil; it happens regularly in certain jurisdictions. Far less dangerous, but still questionable, is the commoner provision that 5 points be added to passing scores of able-bodied veterans and 10 points to passing scores of disabled veterans.

Another form of preference requested by veterans is that the period spent in military or naval service be included in experience scored by examinations. It would seem reasonable to credit such service as general experience or even as special technical experience when applicable. But to credit it as specialized experience per se is another matter.

Other types of existing veteran preference, state and federal, which show the ingenuity and successful campaigning of veteran lobbies are: exemptions from age, height, weight, and health re-

¹ And also for holders of congressional medals.

² This point preference in Ohio goes as high as 20 per cent of the total score made.

quirements in examinations and appointments; preference in promotion and in retention; restrictions on removal of veterans from office; special privilege in figuring the basis of retirement; provision that "same ratings"¹ be decided in favor of veterans; waiver of the apportionment rule² for veterans in the federal service; the federal requirement by Executive Order of April 24, 1931, that special quarterly examinations be given for disabled veterans (and others entitled to a ten-point preference) for positions for which eligible lists already exist;³ waiver for veterans of the "1-in-3" appointment rule;⁴ waiver of reinstatement restrictions; the unique New Jersey provision that veterans employed by the state may attend state and national veterans' conventions on state time and at state expense; and North Dakota's protective specification that one of the seven members of the State Board of Public Welfare must be a veteran.

It would seem more reasonable to limit preference of various sorts to disabled veterans and their wives or widows as is done in certain states than to extend it to able-bodied persons who are ex-soldiers, sailors, or marines. Points in question which would merit further discussion if space permitted are the degree of qualifying disability which should be allowed, whether or not disability should be service connected, and the amount of preference to be conceded.

Civil service legislation cannot, of course, be held responsible for existence of veteran preference, but it seems on the whole to be more rife in jurisdictions having civil service than in those where methods of appointment are less formally established or where the patronage system prevails. "In competition with the spoils system, veteran preference appears, as far as evidence is

¹ This is the term used in federal rulings to designate ties in score.

² For discussion of apportionment plan, see pp. 70-71.

³ This gives a very substantial advantage, since in the federal classified service disabled veterans go to the top of the list for any examination in which they achieve a passing score.

⁴ This plan permits the appointment of any one of the first three candidates on a register or eligible list.

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available, to stand much less chance of being effective than in competition with the merit system."¹ It may be that the more rules and regulations on methods of appointment there are, the more opportunity is given for legalizing exceptions to them.

Bills suggesting new forms of veteran preference crop up every year in each jurisdiction and are ably sponsored and defended. They do not all present the same type of threat to the merit principle and for that reason judgment is needed to distinguish the better from the worse and to campaign accordingly. Veteran preference is a problem that may spring up afresh when any new government department is established, when any existing department goes under a merit system, or when any process of constitutional amendment or governmental reorganization takes place. For this reason it deserves watchful concern and study.

Preference for Incumbents. Holders of public positions, particularly in metropolitan centers, are well organized to present their claims for preferment under civil service. They may be interested in preferment when a department is inducted into civil service, in promotional opportunities, or in special protection in relation to separations from service.²

Claims of incumbents for preferment may be presented to civil service agencies either directly or through employes' associations or labor organizations. Unions of government employes have won many concessions not only in relation to working conditions but in relation to preferment in selection, promotion, and separation. On the other hand, employes in certain new departments to which unionization has not yet extended have also been successful in achieving their objectives, and the result of union efforts in relation to civil service has not been unqualifiedly in the direction of strengthening the merit principle, once legislation has been enacted.

¹ Miller, John F., *Veteran Preference in the Public Service*. Monograph no. 10 in *Problems of the American Public Service*, p. 273.

² See pp. 161-162, 242-248, and Appendix.

As self-protective organizations, the efforts of labor unions naturally do not coincide along all fronts with the efforts of others interested in the spread of civil service. It was stated in Chapter I that the objectives of civil service are twofold: first, the application of the merit principle to the selection, promotion, and management of government personnel, including terms of dismissal; and, second, the achievement of proper conditions of employment, including security of tenure, and adequate compensation. Not all groups concerned with one of these objectives are necessarily committed to the other; in fact, the two objectives may conflict. Unions, as they affect civil service, are largely groups of incumbents or of others pledged to support their interests. They tend, therefore, to exert pressure for extension of the protective features of civil service, but often oppose an extension of the merit principle which would create competition from outsiders for positions in the public service.

In an article on Civil Service Coverage, which gives the typical union point of view, Maynard Boyer states that the unions in Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York have come out for the establishment of a merit system and for the "covering-in" (also called "blanketing-in"¹) of the present staff, either by direct and automatic transfer or by non-competitive qualifying examination. As indicating the major objective of the group, the emphasis of his closing paragraph is significant:

With the legislative sessions drawing to a close it is difficult to predict the degree of success the unions' efforts will achieve. It is significant, however, that in Pennsylvania the Goodrich Committee recommendation for open competitive examinations has been amended to allow for the inclusion of the present staff after a closed qualifying examination, and that in New York the Municipal Civil Service Commission has been forced to grant higher credit ratings for experience for jobs in the reorganized relief bureau. These concessions are tan-

¹ Meaning that appointments are confirmed without any examination—either qualifying or open-competitive. See also p. 121.

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gible evidence of the effectiveness to date of the unions' campaigns, and presage further gains in the near future.¹

On the rights of incumbents to special consideration, there are a number of conflicting issues to be weighed. What about the employe's vested interest in the job versus the public's right to the best service that money can buy? Which should weigh down the scales more heavily, the political inexpediency of a bill which would cause a large number of office-holders to lose their jobs, or the social inexpediency of "blanketing-in," and so cementing into their jobs a group of perhaps inferior incumbents? What about the administrative costs of thus "blanketing-in" as compared with the costs, in service and money, of destroying a functioning organization through such a major staff upheaval as might follow the unequivocal application of the merit principle? What about net results of either program in quality of service to the group which the program serves?

The possible degrees of special consideration which might be given to present incumbents run on a scale something like this:

They may be blanketed-in. The question of merit would then presumably be limited to this query: may it be assumed that they were cemented in because they were qualified? The affirmative assumption might be safely made in some administrations and be decidedly open to question in others.

They may all be given a qualifying examination and re-appointed if they make the required minimum grade.² In this case they are measured against a standard, and do not compete with outsiders.

They may be given a qualifying examination if they meet entrance requirements, or in some cases only entrance requirements on education and experience but not on health and age. If they make the required minimum grade they are then re-appointed.

¹ *In Social Work Today*, vol. 4, no. 9, June, 1937, pp. 5-6. This article is quoted because of the point of view it represents, not for the information it contains, since each of the decisions referred to was later reversed. The incumbents of the Department of Public Assistance in Pennsylvania competed in the examination on an equal footing with outsiders. For later developments in the New York City situation, see pp. 161-162.

² See p. 121 for variation on this in the federal service.

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They may take an open competitive examination but be given extra credit for experience in the job. Such credit may be given outright or by way of rating that experience so much higher than other experience that the same result is attained.

They may take an open competitive examination on an equal basis with outsiders but be given preference in appointment if their scores exceed a fixed level.

They may compete on an equal basis with outsiders, the only differential being their more intimate knowledge of the job and therefore presumably better equipment for passing the examination.

Somewhere along this front between what is theoretically desirable and what is demanded, lies a position which the civil service agency considers it is expedient to assume and defend in each instance. In most cases some form of exacting qualifying examination in which age and health restrictions were removed would probably represent a reasonable reconciliation of conflicting objectives. It is hardly fair to have recruited persons over fifty years old, or persons with physical handicaps, allowed them to work through the period of the organization's growing pains, and then to exclude them from the organization, in its more developed stage, on the score of physical condition alone. It is not realistic to expect the controlling element in a legislature to approve a system that fails to give some differential to a staff appointed during the period of that legislature's incumbency, nor to expect the staff and other pressure groups with which it may be affiliated to "take lying down" such failure to recognize past service. On the other hand, it is certainly unfair to the public and to a future staff not to hold the present staff to some measure of excellence. Whether or not it is reasonable to debar incumbents from taking a qualifying examination because their records are low, or because they lack education or experience, is a delicate problem. Government service is planned for the public, whose interests are the ultimate ones to be served, but this fact is often forgotten in the clash of opposing forces.

Another form of special privilege, to which further reference

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will be made,¹ which is sought by incumbents and may constitute an inroad on the merit principle, is exclusion of all considerations save that of seniority as a basis for making separations from service.² The traditional position of organized labor is that separations should be based primarily on seniority, sometimes to the exclusion of all other criteria. This position in relation to tenure in government departments is supported by the tendency of earlier civil service legislation to stress security rather than efficiency. The professional worker's habit of making decisions on an individual basis makes it difficult for him to accept any such rigid limitation. The individual approach argues for use of an evaluation of performance as a criterion for separations as well as for promotions. There is good basis for arguing, however, that seniority should be included at least as one of the factors in making individual staff evaluations.

RESIDENCE RESTRICTIONS

Residence restrictions³ on government appointments are one of the most annoying limitations placed on civil service agencies—annoying because they sometimes make it impossible to produce registers of qualified candidates. The residence limitation may be written into law, it may derive from executive order, or depend only upon popular opinion, which, if strong enough, has the weight of a mandate. Residence restrictions may apply to all positions or exceptions may be allowed for positions for which special qualifications are necessary. Residence restrictions may be absolute, regardless of whether local qualified candidates are available; or the law or regulation may permit appointment of non-residents

¹ See pp. 207–208.

² In his report on *The Administration of the Civil Service in Massachusetts*, George C. S. Benson refers to the fact that "legislative hamstringing of state and city administrators by restricting the right of removal has been pushed through the legislature by organized civil service employees." Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1935, p. 14.

³ See also pp. 108–109; and for special reference to public welfare positions, pp. 233–236.

if qualified local people are not obtainable. Residence restrictions seem more justifiable to students of government in proportion to the flexibility allowed.

Several considerations apparently give rise to residence restrictions, some sounder than others. They result in part from pressure on elected officials by constituents who are seeking special privilege in return for political support.

They come also as a result of a provincial point of view that local money should be expended locally because of the direct results in relieving local unemployment and its secondary effect of stimulating local business. Pressure for residence restrictions is thus certain to be increased in times of general shortage of employment. When jobs are scarce and relief rolls and taxes are high, taxpayers feel that local opportunities, particularly in tax-supported agencies, should be reserved for local people.

Residence restrictions on public appointments may come about also through community fear that local needs may be misinterpreted to state and federal departments unless presented by persons who know local conditions and prejudices.

A form of residence restriction due largely, it would seem, to this last consideration, is the federal apportionment plan. Under this system persons are appointed from states to the federal service in proportion to the population of the several states. At least that is the theory. In practical application for the purposes of apportionment, states are merely put in two categories, those having more than their proportionate share of representation in the Washington federal service, and those having less. There is no distinction on the basis of residence made among eligibles from the majority of states which are always below their quota. Federal apportionment applies legally, however, only to persons employed in the classified departmental service in Washington, D. C.¹ More-

¹ While the apportionment law does not apply to the field service, the Commission has observed the principle of local certification, within the limits of good administration, for many field positions such as those in clerical and mechanical occupations.

over, the principle of state quotas applies only to the federal service as a whole and is not carried down into distribution within a single department. This kind of limited residence requirement has certain generally desirable political and administrative results although it may occasionally prevent or delay a good individual appointment. Without such a plan appointment to the staff of federal departments would have been almost exclusively from residents of Washington, D. C., and its immediate environs. The result might have been lack of sensitivity to countrywide needs and overemphasis on the point of view of a small section of the country. The difficulty in federal apportionment, as in other localistic provisions, is that special abilities are not always distributed in proportion to population nor are special training centers distributed equally throughout the states.

A form of localism that threatens the merit principle far more than federal apportionment is the increasing rigidity and length of residence requirements for appointment to state, county, and municipal positions. Residence may be variously defined in terms of actual domicile in the territory, record of voting, record of taxpaying, or domicile of relatives. In some cases only intent to establish domicile subsequent to appointment is required.

The narrower are residence restrictions territorially, the more hampering are they to a system of appointing and promoting on merit. They not only limit recruitment of qualified personnel but prevent advancement from state to state or county to county. The absurdity of city residence requirements is seen clearly in the case of large centers like Chicago, New York, and San Francisco, where large numbers of the working population of the city, and particularly those with families, live in suburban areas and thereby are excluded from the city civil service unless they move into the city proper.

Despite the attitude of taxpayers, it scarcely seems that the local benefits to be derived from rigid restrictions of this sort are sufficient to offset their cost. Each community presumably wants the

best personnel it can get for public service; but ability to do special jobs does not necessarily come with residence. Even a large city or a whole state may not produce a person qualified for a single specialized job. No one would object to preferment of local personnel when and if it ranks equally with outsiders in respect to qualifications. Those interested in good government do object to the substitution of residence for merit as a primary basis of selection. It is easy to see why localism is politically desirable in a system where patronage appointments have prevailed. It is surprising and disappointing to see localism increasing under merit systems and dominating appointments which should have little political significance.

Residence restrictions on the whole would seem to be a problem, like divorce and liquor control, that can be successfully attacked only through some agreement to which all states subscribe. If forty-six states have residence requirements and two do not, those two are likely to become a training and recruiting ground for positions in the rest of the country for which the supply of local qualified workers is limited. The state without residence requirements recruits the best qualified individuals it can from the entire country, spends money in examining, inducting, and training only to lose the individual shortly thereafter to his native state. The appointee goes back home because his home state has raised the salary ante above the customary level to attract its wandering "native sons" back to the fold. The same situation applies within a state where all but a few counties have county residence clauses.

NEGLECT OR DELIBERATE DISREGARD OF THE MERIT PRINCIPLE

Some of the most serious inroads made on the merit principle may come through neglect or inability of the civil service agency to enforce the power it possesses. The blame may rest on the personnel or methods of the civil service agency or it may be attributable to lack of support from governor, mayor, legislature, or de-

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partment heads, to hostility of the courts, or to ignorance or lethargy on the part of professional and technical groups and the general public. Whatever the cause, an undesirable situation is to be suggested when any of the following are found: an undue number of provisional appointments¹ in fields in which there are existing appropriate registers from which to select qualified personnel; provisional appointments that habitually last beyond the approved period; approval by the civil service agency of flagrantly low standards or abandonment of minimum standards for provisional and temporary appointments; temporary appointments that are continually renewed; perfunctory tests; tests obviously "fixed" to favor a particular individual either through too specialized entrance requirements,² through the content of test material, or through "doctoring" the usual system of grading training and experience; an undue amount of hiring and firing during the probation period;³ perfunctory use of service ratings or lack of supporting evidence in such ratings for dismissals or demotions.⁴

In a study of a large number of civil service examinations for social work positions, one single-page written test for a public welfare position is noted which consisted of six questions on names and addresses of local public institutions. The author adds, "That this examination was a mere formality and a farcical exploitation of the civil service examination process was only too apparent."⁵

These and similar signs whenever noted suggest either that the civil service agency is neglecting to carry out the function for which it was designed, or that some group is successfully circumventing its efforts to operate in accordance with the mandate given it. Continued attention should be given, therefore, by those interested in extension of the merit principle, to the nature of examina-

¹ For discussion of provisional appointments, see pp. 184-185.

² Discussed on pp. 110-126, 284-306.

³ Discussed on pp. 185-190.

⁴ Discussed on pp. 191-209.

⁵ Booth, Florence, *Civil Service Procedures for Social Work Positions*. American Public Welfare Association, Chicago, 1939, p. 35.

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tion announcements, provisional and permanent appointments, content of examinations, make-up of oral boards, nature of appeals, basis of dismissals, and other evidences of the caliber of the work of the civil service agency.

TENDENCY TO CONSIDER THE CANDIDATE'S NEED IN MAKING APPOINTMENTS

The tendency to use the public payroll as a substitute for relief or to relate employment to need rather than to ability of applicant or incumbent may constitute a baffling type of inroad on the application of the merit principle because it is indirect and clothed in humanitarian guise. This tendency has a long history in public service. It shows itself in many forms, and may be found in the business world as well as in public employment, although perhaps to lesser degree. It seems to have had a particular affinity for public welfare. The mixture of work relief and straight employment found in the WPA and in the earlier home relief agencies in certain centers has probably increased the public's confusion as to what the desirable basis of appointment should be in public welfare departments.

Consideration of financial and marital status in making appointments; discrimination against employing women; exclusion of all considerations save seniority and need as a basis for making promotions; the tendency to hold the superannuated on the payroll beyond legitimate retirement age as a way of compensating for an inadequate pension system—all these are evidences of a paternalistic and somewhat warped interpretation of the merit principle. The very term "merit" seems sometimes to be used as though it included, along with the idea of preparation or achievement, an element of "worthiness," implying as that term does, a combination of need and a good moral character.

For example, in response to a letter of inquiry as to what application of the merit principle is made in the selection of public welfare personnel, one state commissioner of public welfare replied (July 15,

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1938), "We do not have anything in our law specifically authorizing us to establish the merit principle. Of course, when there is an opportunity for promotion or an increase in salary we try to keep in mind those of our force most deserving and best prepared for the work in hand."

It may be that the writer of this letter meant "most deserving" in terms of qualifications and performance. It seems more likely, however, that his use of "most deserving" carries some flavor of local approval, based on need and general standing in the community.

Such confusion of terms and ideas is worth noting and attempting to clarify. In deciding which of two candidates to appoint, promote, or dismiss, no one would object to considering their financial responsibilities so long as they rated equally in ability. But such an even balance does not often exist; nor would anyone suggest that seniority and need be forgotten to the extent that an employe with a long record of service be dismissed shortly before he becomes pensionable in favor of a younger employe with greater ability. It is apparent that while ability should be the sole basis for appointments and promotion, a fine balance of other factors needs to be kept in considering the basis for separations from service under a merit system.

To sum up, then, the merit principle in public personnel administration is constantly under attack because it cuts directly across all forms of special privilege. It may be subject to open sorties or to sniping from cover. The ingenuity and determination of special interest groups are shown in the subtlety of the disguises and stratagems to which they resort. Inroads on the civil service system may be found in legislation which is proposed on almost any subject; in riders to seemingly unrelated bills; in appointments and election to important government offices and committees; in decisions on cases of appeal against civil service rulings. To detect these and meet the situation created with ingenuity, courage, and political wisdom, and at the same time to carry forward a technically competent and going concern requires leadership of high order.

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Public administrators and other public employes must be helped to recognize what advantages they will secure from a merit system, and what inconveniences will necessarily accompany those advantages. Most of all, they must know how a merit system works, if they are to guard and defend it. This necessitates a broad and continuous educational program directed at component community groups in terms of their special interest. Civil service commissions and staffs of personnel departments in many jurisdictions are receiving invaluable help in this program from such organizations as civil service reform associations, leagues of women voters, municipal leagues, and from professional associations in the several fields. Such educational programs are likely to be effective in proportion to the closeness of co-operation between civil service personnel and local supporting groups.

Those in immediate control of a merit system have heavy responsibility. The job of commissioner or personnel director carries power for good or evil. When the community understands how great is this power it often backs the appointment of honest, broadminded, and courageous officials. Technical competence costs money. Taxpayers are more ready to pay the bill when they understand that honesty and courage, combined with technical competence, really pay dividends.

CHAPTER IV

SOME MAJOR ORGANIZATION PROBLEMS IN CIVIL SERVICE

RELATING any centralized special service to a group of departments or bureaus is a delicate process. Each special department or bureau served by a central organization is likely to feel that its own problems are individual and not easily understood by a central service. This charge is made against all personnel bureaus. It is particularly likely, perhaps, to be brought against those staffed by trained technicians from the personnel field, who are frequently found in civil service agencies using formal test procedures. Because the form in which a service is organized and provided often affects the ease with which it may be accepted, it is worth while to note the ways in which agencies administering a merit program are set up, and to consider a few of the many organization problems that arise.

FORM OF ORGANIZATION: COMMISSION OR DEPARTMENT

Civil service agencies generally follow one of two typical organization plans, the commission form of management, or the single-headed or departmental form. These types of direction are to be found in federal, state, county, and municipal civil service agencies.

The plan of administering civil service agencies through a commission is the older of the two. Commissions are usually bipartisan, two to five members being commonly appointed for overlapping terms.

Examples of this form are the two-member commission of Ohio, the three-member commissions of New York, Maine, Illinois, and the four- and five-member commissions in Michigan and California, respectively.

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A notable exception to the common form among older state civil service organizations is Maryland's Department of State Employment and Registration, established in 1920 and headed by an executive who bears the title of commissioner, and who is appointed by the governor.

The duties of a commission are sometimes purely policy-making, or quasi-legal and quasi-judicial, with a staff to administer its program. In other cases both policy-making and administrative functions are carried out by the commission itself, in which case one member is sometimes assigned administrative responsibility.

This was the situation, for example, in Massachusetts, where administrative functions were exercised by the commissioner and quasi-legal, quasi-judicial functions were assigned to the associate commissioners. A recent revision of the law gives administrative and technical functions to a personnel director.

A more recent trend has been to regard the agency administering the merit plan as one of the administrative branches of government—a department or bureau of personnel under an executive responsible to the chief executive of the political subdivision. This is the structure in Connecticut and, as previously indicated, in Maryland.

The element of bi-partisan protection is omitted in this type of organization. Reform associations and others interested in the impartial administration of civil service do not particularly regret this omission because they believe that the safeguard of a bi-partisan commission is theoretical rather than real. The majority members of such a commission, chosen usually for their political prominence, tend to be politically minded, "and the minority member is generally a 'friendly Indian' rather than a militant adherent of the opposition."¹

The executive of the agency may be appointed by the chief executive of the political subdivision, by the commission, or by an ad-

¹ The Reorganization Bill, *in* *Good Government*, vol. 55, no. 2, March-April, 1938, p. 14.

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visory board. The method may be either by direct appointment or appointment from an eligible group chosen by competitive examination.

Much has been written on the relative advantages of these two forms of civil service administration. Both types have proved workable. To some, the weight of argument is in favor of the single-headed plan as more efficient and more likely to weave closely together the merit plan of selection and general personnel management. To others, the advantage of retaining the several points of view and abilities of members of a commission is important enough to offset the cumbersomeness of the commission structure. Those who favor the commission plan cite also the danger of political control through a single partisan executive.

In addition to the two prevalent forms of civil service administration just mentioned—the commission and the departmental types—there is a third form, in the nature of a compromise between the two. Its major purpose appears to be to preserve the element of public representation and the breadth of view of a multiple-member commission along with the improved efficiency of administration of the single-headed commission or departmental administrator.

A plan¹ incorporating this form has been prepared by the National Civil Service Reform League and the National Municipal League, which in turn have co-operated with other interested organizations, such, for instance, as the Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada. It has already been adopted by a number of states and other jurisdictions, notably by the states of Alabama, California, Minnesota, and Rhode Island.

In order to accomplish its purpose, the draft provides for a three-member commission, appointed by the governor, charged with general responsibility to study and investigate, and to pro-

¹ See Draft of a State Civil Service Law, National Civil Service Reform League and National Municipal League, New York, n.d. See also the Merit System Councils proposed by the Social Security Board, p. 49 of this book, and the Appendix.

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mote the successful administration of personnel. The duties of this commission include the appellate function and participation in the adoption of the classification plan and other rulings. Direct administrative responsibility, however, is lodged with the director, who must himself be chosen in accordance with the principles and examining processes of the merit system. Three names of eligibles so chosen are offered to the governor for appointment to the office of director. "The Director as executive head of the Department, shall direct and supervise all its administrative and technical activities"—including the recommendation to the commission of a classification plan, rates of pay, and all other administrative rulings. The detailed provisions of the law, which cannot be stated here, appear to be liberal and in accordance with the better principles and standards of merit system administration.

RELATION BETWEEN COMMISSION AND STAFF

The important factor in organization seems to be a clear definition between the functions of executive and board. Advocates of the departmental type of organization feel that lines of authority are more likely to be kept clear in that type of structure than under a commission system. There is a minor reason why executive functions and those of a board or commission are likely to overlap under a commission system. Commissions as well as staff are often compensated for service: sometimes each of the commissioners receives an annual salary; sometimes one is on annual salary and the others are paid per diem. The aggregate per diem may be unlimited or an annual maximum may be fixed. The last mentioned plan, that of a per diem with a low annual maximum, would seem to have the advantage of compensating for heavy demands often made upon the commission's time, yet limiting the quantity of compensated service given by commissioners to a point where it is not likely to interfere with the area of responsibility of the administrative officer. If no annual maximum is set to a per diem there is danger that one or more members of a commission

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may settle down to a full-time administrative job, particularly if the per diem is attractive, thus seriously hampering the executive in the performance of his duties.

EFFECT OF BUDGET LIMITATIONS

Staffs of agencies which administer merit systems vary widely in size and organization, from the United States Civil Service Commission with its staff of 1,743 (June, 1939) to the commission or departmental bureau staffed by one examiner and one or more clerical assistants. Some civil service agencies employ permanent specialists in the field of the major departments which they serve; some call in paid specialists as needed; some depend entirely on voluntary service from professional and technical groups. Determinants seem to be the scope of subject matter with which the agency must deal, its will to equip itself with utmost efficiency for its task, and its budget limitations. Apart from budgetary considerations perhaps the important factor here is the desire of the civil service agency to avail itself of technical and professional opinion, regardless of whether or not this is secured on a paid basis. Civil service agencies are notoriously under-budgeted, especially in view of their constant need for highly qualified technical service in many fields and for objective study of their own methodology.

Newspapers reported during the summer of 1938 that difficulties due to limited funds were to be anticipated in carrying out President Roosevelt's proposal to increase the classified service by including New Deal agency employes. For instance, in 1933, when the United States Civil Service Commission examined 191,771 applicants it received an appropriation of \$1,274,587; while in 1937 it examined 820,681 applicants and received only \$2,627,700.

State and local commissions over the country are in similar situations as the attempt to balance the budget conflicts with the tendency to increase civil service coverage.

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RELATION BETWEEN MERIT AGENCY AND OPERATING DEPARTMENT

A second relationship, in addition to that between commission and staff, which may need careful study as civil service agencies broaden in scope, is that of an agency administering a merit program, to the personnel division of the operating department or to that department's general program. There is less likely to be conflict of objectives when the concern of the civil service agency is limited to procedures of testing, certification, appeals, and to the mechanics of vacations, retirements, and similar traditional civil service functions. When, however, the civil service agency ventures into areas which involve intimate knowledge of the departmental program, the lines of demarcation of responsibility may become confused. Friction may ensue, for instance, when the civil service agency undertakes to make or to direct the analysis of position requirements which is the basis of classification; when it establishes service ratings, conducts or prescribes in-service training, determines promotions or separations on the basis of service ratings, and in general comes into the area of employer-employee relationship. This is a growing and present-day problem as civil service agencies develop ambition to broaden their programs into more comprehensive systems of personnel management. Because personnel management is so directly concerned with the relationship of administrator to total staff and of supervisor to those supervised, the administrator of an operating department is inclined to feel that he cannot delegate to a central agency certain phases of day-to-day management of personnel.

Lewis Meriam's book on *Public Personnel Problems*,¹ previously mentioned, discusses at length the relationship of central personnel bureaus to a department administrator. He divides personnel administration into operating, control, and developmental administration. Of these, he assigns the major responsibility for the first to the operating

¹ *Public Personnel Problems: From the Standpoint of the Operating Officer.* The Brookings Institution, Washington, D. C., 1938.

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department, for the second to the agency administering the merit plan, and for the third to both of these and to various outside organizations.

One possible general division of function might be that the central civil service agency be responsible for selection of personnel up to the point of certification, serve as the specialist on test methodology, and act as the co-ordinator of plans affecting development of staff; and that the operating department should co-operate in the process of selection, but should initiate and carry through the program of staff management and development, relating these, however, through the central personnel agency, to developmental plans in use by other government bureaus.¹ There is, however, no general agreement on this subject.

Need is also recognized for a clear definition of function and relationship between a bureau administering a merit system within a single department and other departmental functions. While responsibility for carrying out certain functions such as position-analysis and the development of service rating systems may be borne jointly by the department head and his subordinate in charge of the merit system, it is generally felt that the administration of examinations should be separated from the rest of the department's program. In recognition of this fact, separate offices for departmental personnel bureaus are sometimes specified in laws or rules setting up a departmental merit system.

In the Rules and Regulations Governing the Merit System for the State Department of Social Security of the State of Washington, for example, the following principle is set down: "The offices of the Chief Examiner and his staff shall in every way be separated from the quarters of the department which the merit system serves." (Page 6.)

Certainly, in programs with such changing function and focus as both civil service and public welfare there is great need for

¹ For a full discussion of these relationships, see *Personnel Administration in the Federal Service*, by Floyd W. Reeves and Paul T. David. *Studies on Administrative Management in Government of the United States*, no. 1, President's Committee on Administrative Management. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1937, pp. 43-44.

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flexibility, an experimental point of view, and interdepartmental respect in the delicate process of relating the work of each to the other.

CHAPTER V

CLASSIFICATION OF POSITIONS AND COMPENSATION

IT IS important that social workers acquire some understanding not only of the philosophy, but also of the terminology, functions, and techniques of civil service agencies because of the sensitive relationship which exists when two technical fields touch on a common problem. These civil service procedures will determine to an increasing degree the selection and careers of social workers in public agencies, and the welfare of those whom they serve. Social workers need such understanding in order that they may be able to plan their co-operation with civil service agencies most effectively to the end of furthering their mutual interests.

What then are the major functions of civil service organizations today and the high points of techniques by which they are carried through? The programs of the larger or more progressive agencies indicate that they consider the following as basic responsibilities in varying degrees:

1. Classification of positions and establishment of rates of compensation
2. Recruitment
3. Selection of personnel, including examination, certification and supervision, not only of the initial appointment, but also of confirmation after a probationary period
4. Conducting periodic ratings, as a means of controlling promotions in, and separations from, service
5. Providing for in-service training, vacations, and leaves
6. Handling appeals

In addition to these six functions a seventh, that of vocational guidance, would seem to be an appropriate addition. Research as a separate function is not treated here, although it goes almost

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without saying that a modern progressive personnel department will, so far as funds allow, carry on a systematic program of analysis of the effectiveness of its own work.¹ Research on methods of testing and evaluation has been impossible in many progressive agencies because of limited budget.

While many civil service agencies conduct some form of research program the direct charge to undertake such activity is found in the statutes for only one of the state civil service commissions or agencies administering a departmental merit program. The "Act Establishing a Merit System for State Employees," Chapter 171 of Public Health Acts of 1937 for the State of Connecticut (Section 9, page 5) provides that the Personnel Department "shall conduct research into personnel standards, methods of selection, service ratings, and other problems of personnel administration."

All civil service agencies are of course concerned with selection of personnel but probably no one civil service agency undertakes all the other responsibilities just listed. Certainly no one agency has developed each of them to the maximum degree.

CLASSIFICATION OF POSITIONS

The basic requirement for personnel administration in large organizations is position-classification, or the analysis and subsequent allocation of individual positions into groups or classes on the basis of similarity of duties and responsibilities. Analysis must be such that the allocations and the system of classes (or "classifi-

¹ A first-rate example of the kind of research that helps to improve testing techniques all the way from setting entrance qualifications through scoring, is Harry Rosenberg's *An Analysis of the Results of a Civil Service Examination for the Position of Social Welfare Agent*, California State Personnel Board, Sacramento, January 27, 1939. So far as the author knows, this study is unique, at least in relation to positions in the public welfare field, in the thoroughness with which it analyzes the values and limitations of a particular examination and all its components, and attempts to correlate performance on the test with the various factors in education, training, age, and membership in professional associations. It is a study that at once illustrates the complexity of measuring ability and creates respect for the care with which this particular agency has criticized its own efforts. The study produced some very significant and well substantiated recommendations for modification of future examinations for public welfare positions.

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cation plan") resulting may become the basis on which personnel procedures may be planned and executed.¹

These personnel procedures may include setting compensation rates, recruiting, selection, transfer, in-service training, promotions, and separations from service. To each of these, classification of positions is fundamental. Further than this, classification provides an orderly basis for organizing and clarifying facts for legislative action, and particularly for facilitating the consideration and analysis of budget appropriations. The installation of a sound classification system, therefore, is fundamental to a good civil service program.

A classification plan should, and often does, apply to all positions within a political jurisdiction whether or not they are subject to the rules and regulations of a merit system.²

Classification of positions in a given jurisdiction or department may be a function of the agency administering the merit program, or it may be delegated to a separate body such as a classification board. In the latter event the civil service agency is usually represented on the classification board and often the budget or finance department is represented also. Sometimes responsibility for drawing up, installing, and maintaining a classification plan is assigned in toto to the comptroller or to a financial department. When this is the case, one suspects some confusion in the minds of the legislators as to the nature and purpose of classification, which

¹ For a clear and condensed discussion of classification, see *Facts and Fallacies about Position-Classification*, by Ismar Baruch. Pamphlet no. 10. Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada, Chicago, November, 1937.

² Here we find the cause of a common confusion in terminology. Civil service literature refers to the "classified" and "unclassified" service, meaning by the first those positions subject to civil service rules and regulations, and by the second those positions filled by election, ex-officio, or exempted from civil service control for any other reason. And yet, a "position-classification plan" may be inclusive of the thus defined "classified" and "unclassified" service for which the terms "non-exempt" and "exempt" would be more accurately descriptive. Students of the subject differentiate between these two uses of "classification" by using the term "jurisdictional" or "status classification" to refer to a grouping according to exemption from civil service rules, and the term "duties classification" to refer to a grouping of positions—whether exempt or not—according to duties and responsibilities.

they may have considered as identical with or incidental to standardization of salary only. Classification of positions and drawing up pay schedules for them when classified are two separate functions.¹ Each is essential to good administration, but classification is the more fundamental since it forms the basis for many personnel and fiscal procedures or programs, of which the fixing of pay rates is only one. Certain considerations affecting wage rates, not reflected in the classification plan, are weighed in developing a pay plan, such as balance of demand and supply of workers in special fields, the prevailing rate of wages in private enterprise, difficulties of recruiting for government service, changes in the cost of living, and ability of the jurisdiction to meet salary costs.

Position-classification proceeds on an impersonal basis. It regards a position as composed of a certain set of duties, tasks, and responsibilities which are assignable to one individual. For example, a stenographic position of a given class or grade is regarded as involving certain duties and a certain standard of performance, regardless of who is occupying it at the moment, or how he carries out his responsibilities. There may be degrees in stenographic skill needed in different positions, and different degrees of initial competence demanded for them. Because of these differences there may be several classes or grades of each occupation, justifying differences in pay between classes or grades. Variations in the performance of individuals in positions of the same class are recognized by establishing a range of pay for such cases, with a definite minimum and maximum.

Position-Analysis. In devising a plan for position-classification, the duties of every position in the department or service must first be ascertained and described without reference to the actual qualifications, compensation or skill of the incumbent. He may not have ability to carry out these duties as satisfactorily as might be desired, or he may have additional skills not called for in the posi-

¹ See p. 48 and Appendix. Discussed in relation to social work on pp. 261-265.

tion. These are "minuses" and "pluses" which relate to him alone and are therefore irrelevant to classification. Positions and not individuals are to be analyzed, described, and classified.

Position-analysis, as a technique of personnel administration, is usually made by the specialist in personnel. If not made by him personally, the method is outlined by him in detail. However, to analyze and interpret the content of positions in the complex and indefinite areas of many of the professions, notably in social work, may require also the skill and knowledge of the specialist in the subject matter of the position involved. Position-analysis, in professional fields, therefore, to be successful must be a joint enterprise of personnel expert and subject expert.

The fundamental requirement of a good position-analysis is its complete realism as a study of the content of a given position. It should not be based upon theories about what the incumbent ought to do, nor even on his own account of his activities, although a primary tool of the position-analysis is either the questionnaire or the carefully kept daily log in which an employe records minutely what he actually did while he was doing it. Other tools in position-analysis are interviews with the incumbent and his supervisors, a study of the nature of work accomplished, analysis of records of production, study of flow of work, and study of organization charts.

Position-Allocation. The second step in developing a classification plan is to allocate into classes those positions which impose similar duties and responsibilities, and which therefore require similar knowledge and skills—one test of good classifying being whether all positions in a given class can be filled from the same employment list or register.¹ If differences between any one position and others in the class are so great that it cannot be treated as identical with others in matters of selection, promotion, transfer,

¹ An employment register is the list of eligibles established on the merit principle for any single position or group of positions. It does not necessarily coincide with the list of those certified for a given position although it may. For further clarification of this point, see pp. 39-40.

and compensation, then that position is not well allocated or "classified," and belongs in another class. If the analysis has been carefully and thoroughly made, and the basic classes established with clear distinctions among them, the actual allocation of individual positions into classes is greatly simplified. The difficult tasks are to secure facts, analyze their significance, and establish classes of positions.

Class-Specifications. The third step in developing a classification plan is to write specifications, duties, responsibilities, scope, and qualifications for each class of positions. These detailed specifications become the basis of future allocation of positions to the class and serve as the guide for examination announcements.

The difference between a position-analysis, a position-description, and a class-specification for the purpose of classification, as the terms are here used, is slight but real. A position-analysis is a study of what is; a position-description is a story of what is typical and to be expected in the future in a given position. A class-specification is a description of the duties, responsibilities, and characteristics of several positions which have been grouped together on the basis of similarities in the classification plan. Some realignment of the functions of a given position may be found necessary between making a position-analysis and writing a class-specification. A position-analysis may be made of ten clerks' jobs. In general, their activities may be found to be so alike that the same employment register can readily be used to fill all ten positions; and the ten rate the same salary. The class-specification will establish a position-title for the class, list typical duties, standards of quality and quantity, and probably describe the kind of preparation necessary for the class on the basis of what the incumbents should have if their work is to meet an expected level of quality, quantity, or both. A class-specification does not usually attempt to list the minutiae of differences between positions in any given class.

Establishment of Series. A fourth procedure is to group the classes of positions already established into larger service categories according to the general type of function—as, for example, clerical, technical, professional, administrative, and labor. They may be further regrouped into series according to content but regard-

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less of departmental location. For example, "Physician, Grade 1," may be in a department of welfare, health, or education; the service category may be professional; series, medical; grade, No. 1.

Revision of Classification. A sound classification plan incorporates at the start rules and procedures for amendments and alterations of the classes and class specifications so that they may keep pace with changes in individual positions, and in departmental functions and emphases. It must be flexible and contain the principle of growth in order that it may remain a perpetual and up-to-date inventory of the duties and performances of the government's employees. Many classification systems may be excellent when initiated but are allowed to remain unaltered long after the material which they describe has changed beyond recognition. Periodic audits for classification plans are specified in the regulations of certain civil service agencies.

COMPENSATION

The process of classifying positions is usually followed by setting rates of pay and ranges of possible increase for each class. Confusion results from attempting to regard every factor influencing pay rates as influential in determining classification. Because of economic or fiscal influences on rates of compensation, range of salary may not be comparable in different classes carrying the same level of responsibility, but most students of personnel administration hold that this fact should not affect the classification plan. It ought to be possible to some extent to meet such differences in prevailing rates of pay for similarly classed positions by the realistic device of allowing initial appointments to be made at a rate anywhere between the minimum and maximum for a given position, as dictated by market conditions, but uniformly for all entrants at that time. When new appointments are made at a higher than minimum salary, presumably the salaries of incumbents in the same class would be raised to meet that level. The more usual practice, particularly in depression eras, is to make all appointments to a

given class at the minimum salary. Some who have given careful thought to this problem think that the salary range for a given class should be flexible enough to meet differences in conditions of the labor market from time to time, as well as to provide increments to those in a given position in recognition of increased value through continued service. This, however, is a somewhat Utopian ideal in times when balancing the budget is an all-important consideration. Legislators generally fear that the tendency would be to make most appointments at the maximum level if any leeway were allowed.

It is considered important in installing position-classification and compensation plans that neither tenure nor salary of those in office should be affected, except that salaries of present employes which are below the minimum for their class should be raised to the minimum, and those receiving "odd" rates should be brought up to the next higher standard rate. In other respects it is commonly held that the installation of a classification plan should affect only future appointments. This precaution is usually taken not only in fairness to present employes, but also as a way of avoiding suspicion and opposition from incumbents and from their friends and backers.

It is true that a classification plan may show up all kinds of inconsistencies: people may be found under the supervision of others who are getting half as much salary; or attempting to do jobs for which they are clearly unfit. Installing a classification plan may lead incidentally to the administrative discontinuance of certain positions. It may lead to transfer of an individual when his qualifications prove to bear little relation to those indicated as essential in the description of his position, but it is usually considered expedient not to reduce salary in making an adjustment, for the reasons already given.

A good classification should result eventually in "equal pay for equal work"; in salary minima which tend to prevent exploitation and which are at least comparable with those in industry; it should

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clarify avenues of promotion. On all these counts it should be welcomed both by administrators and by rank-and-file workers, but this will be true in practice only so long as classification does not threaten wages or tenure of persons already employed.

Effect of Civil Service on Rates of Pay. No full analysis is made here of rates of pay in agencies operating under a merit system, because material on this subject is available elsewhere. Suffice it to point out that the evidence indicates that government as an employer has tended to raise minimum wage standards but not to advance the maxima.

The Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Better Government Personnel states that "The income chart of the public service . . . has a broad base and a narrow apex, with a relatively high minimum and a relatively low maximum level."¹ In the fiscal year of 1932, for example, while the average income of federal employes was \$1,897, there were (in 1933) only 24 salaries of over \$15,000 in the federal service and only 829 individuals receiving over \$10,000, the latter being but 0.14 per cent of all federal employes.² The Commission's statement is supported by certain findings of the 1931 Personnel Classification Board:³

Finding No. 6.

For positions in the clerical, administrative, and fiscal and the sub-professional services, the Federal pay scale below the \$2,000 level is more liberal than the average pay for similar non-Government positions, and for those above the \$2,000 level it is less liberal. . . .

Finding No. 8.

The Government pay scale for positions in the professional and scientific service compares favorably with the average pay for similar non-

¹ Better Government Personnel. Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Public Service Personnel. McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York, 1935, p. 91.

² *Ibid.*

³ Closing Report of Wage and Personnel Survey, Personnel Classification Board, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1931, pp. 114-122. See also Personnel Administration in the Federal Service, by Floyd W. Reeves and Paul T. David. Studies on Administrative Management in the Government of the United States, no. 1, President's Committee on Administrative Management. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1937, pp. 67-68.

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Government positions below the \$3,800 level, but above the \$3,800 level the Government pay scale is lower and the discrepancy becomes greater as the importance of the work increases.

Finding No. 10.

The salaries paid by private concerns to their major executives exceed those paid by the Federal Government to positions of similar responsibility anywhere from 100 to 500 per cent.

Comparison of federal salaries with those for the 500,000-odd non-government jobs reported in the Classification Board study gives conclusive evidence for the findings cited. For example, in relation to the federal "CAF series" of positions¹ we find the situation shown in the following table:

TABLE 1.—PERCENTAGE OF SELECTED NON-GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES RECEIVING LESS THAN THE MINIMUM OR MORE THAN THE MAXIMUM SALARIES OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES IN SELECTED POSITIONS INVOLVING COMPARABLE DUTIES^a

Federal positions		Percentage of non-government employees receiving	
Title	Salary range	Less than federal minimum	More than federal maximum
CAF- 1	\$1,260-1,560	73.0	4.0
CAF- 2	1,440-1,740	64.0	4.6
CAF- 3	1,620-1,920	51.0	10.5
CAF-15	8,000-9,000	5.5	92.0

^a Table constructed from figures cited on pages 115-117 of Closing Report of Wage and Personnel Survey. Personnel Classification Board, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1931. The total number of non-government employees covered in this study was approximately 500,000. Those whose duties were comparable to those of positions in the federal position class CAF-1 numbered 92,648. The number of those whose duties were comparable to other positions in the CAF series is not cited in the report.

The greater standardization in government salaries is evidenced by the fact that whereas the range of pay for the government position CAF-1 was \$1,260-\$1,560 (as shown above), the range of

¹ CAF is the classification "service" symbol for a whole group of positions in federal departments running from CAF-1, the basic clerical job, to CAF-15, a group of highly responsible administrative posts, the highest paid positions in the series.

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pay for similar work in 92,648 non-government positions was \$480–\$2,600. Average salary for the government position was \$1,406; for the non-government position it was \$1,068, or 24.06 per cent less.

Among many forces operating to hold down salaries for upper-level government positions may be a feeling on the part of legislators that while government should be a model employer in relation to lower-bracket positions, the prestige associated with "top-flight" government positions should compensate for the fact that salaries paid to their incumbents are lower than salaries which they might command in the industrial world. When to prestige—if this is an actuality—is added relative security of civil service tenure, this argument would seem to have weight.

There is another factor that tends to reduce top salaries. In times of depression a constant battle is waged between taxpayers and employe groups on the question of public salaries. The arguments are good for protecting lower-level salaries which afford small margin above cost of living; therefore depression cuts usually fall more heavily on salaries in the upper brackets. Experience has shown that cuts are easily made and hard to restore, and hence the end result tends to be the more or less permanent reduction of higher salaries.

The fact that higher salaries are paid for rank-and-file, and lower salaries for upper positions, in federal service, as compared with those paid in the world outside, may have an important effect on recruiting and promotional policies of merit systems.¹ It may influence promising young people to enter government employment in beginning positions only to leave it when their accumulated experience and training bring them to the point of greatest usefulness in government service. It may deter from entering government service persons qualified by previous experience in responsible technical, professional, and administrative posts.

It is safe to say that introduction of civil service has contributed

¹ For discussion of public welfare salaries, see pp. 261–265.

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toward improvement of government salaries at lower levels, since classification and salary standardization are usually corollaries to introducing a merit system,¹ although it must be admitted that there is some ground for the assumption that states which have civil service systems are, by and large, those which are better organized in other respects and therefore would tend to have a more adequate compensation system, even without civil service.

Some evidence, however, indicates that introduction of a civil service program has tended further to depress the level for top salaries (already low by comparison with private industry) even though it brings about a better salary standard for rank-and-file positions. In other words, departments operating without the civil service system tend to have certain higher salaries for top positions than any to be found in departments within a civil service system.

This may be merely another way of saying that politically favored incumbents may find it easier to rally successful pressure for raising their own salaries when this pressure does not have to be exerted against civil service standards.

Certainly, in relation to whatever positions they cover, merit systems have at least had the effect of standardizing salary scales as between positions, establishing maxima and minima for each position, and making differences as between positions follow some logical order. It is well-nigh impossible to set up and advertise a system of competitive examinations for a hierarchy of positions without relating those positions to each other on an ascending scale in relation to responsibilities and salary. Such advertisement has a most helpful way of showing up inconsistencies and inadequacies. While a departmental administrator may not like the salary scale so set, at least under a merit system he is not in doubt as to the range of salary possibility at any given time.

¹ Of the states having state civil service agencies or personnel departments, all have provided for position-classification and all but Massachusetts for salary standardization.

CHAPTER VI

RECRUITMENT

THE term "recruitment" as used here connotes efforts which are made to attract qualified people to compete for positions in the civil service.¹ The function of recruitment is obviously a fundamental part of any personnel program that aims to put a superior group of persons at the disposal of each appointing officer. Without at least some superior individuals in the competing group, the best that can be hoped for in the eligible list is a high level of mediocrity. During the years when the primary function of civil service was to eliminate special privilege and secure fair competition to an unselected mass, recruiting was limited to wide dissemination of examination announcements. The problem changes when that function becomes secondary to the more aggressive personnel program of securing, developing, and retaining a high level of skilled performance.

While the task of recruiting is primarily to attract people to government service, it has a corollary educational value. It is impossible to attract without describing. If description is well done, particularly in a new or an unfamiliar field, the interested public will necessarily learn something about the position involved. For both reasons the nature of the presentation is highly important to the agency administering the merit program, to the operating department seeking both personnel and public acceptance of its program, and to the profession or special field involved.

Preparing material for recruitment purposes, therefore, as well

¹ Recruitment in this sense does not include any of the processes of selection. In some agencies, however, the term "recruitment" is used in a more comprehensive sense to include all processes from the attraction of personnel into the testing process, through final appointment of certified persons to the job, and even including promotion. The term is thus employed when one speaks, for example, of "recruits" in the army. In this sense recruitment is synonymous with enlistment.

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as the actual business of recruiting is a task that can well be shared among the examining agency, the operating departments whose program is involved, and the profession to which the position is related.

The more specialized the work of the department concerned, the more the civil service agency is disposed to look to the operating department to do much of the actual recruitment. Likewise in recruiting for an entire departmental staff the civil service agency is likely to do most of the recruitment for clerical and rank-and-file positions and to rely on the department to search out personnel for technical and professional services.¹

The focus of the program of recruiting for public services is conditioned somewhat by whether or not the civil service agency and departments which it serves see public service as "career service."² Recruiting for what? Is recruiting in the lower levels aimed at bringing promising beginners into a service which will yield them continually unfolding opportunity and advancement? If so, the major part of the recruiting program, for non-specialized positions at least, may be directed toward young graduates of generalized institutions of higher education. In this event, promotional avenues will have to be kept clear, training opportunities must be generous, and some limits must necessarily be placed on freedom of competition from persons outside the service—at least for better paid and more responsible positions as they become vacant.

Or, is recruitment aimed to attract highly trained people to fill specific positions—people already qualified by specialized technical or professional education and service in private enterprise? In this case, recruiting will be directed toward professional and technical schools and toward people in business and other work under private auspices.

¹ This, however, is not the policy of the United States Civil Service Commission which has plans for a more positive recruitment program to be carried on by its own "principal examiners." (Information from correspondence with member of staff of the Commission.)

² See pp. 36-38, 101-104, 212-213, 295-296.

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In the latter instance, the operating department will have a heavy responsibility in recruitment. In the former, perhaps a larger burden will fall on the civil service agency.

The most satisfactory recruitment program would probably lie somewhere between these two extremes. Up to the present, the process of recruitment and selection for the civil service in this country has mainly followed the second course. There are some signs of late that certain agencies are experimenting in the direction of the first.

DIFFERENCES IN RECRUITMENT IN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES

A comparison of civil service policies in Great Britain and the United States on this point may shed some light on our present position. The American public has been traditionally less enthusiastic about government service than the public of Great Britain, or for that matter, than the public of France or Germany. In Great Britain there exists a class tradition of government service. The so-called "upper" classes, largely products of the English "public"¹ school system, consider it not only an honor but their prerogative to serve the state. Opportunities for vocational and professional advancement and for foreign experience have been good in the British Civil Service because of Britain's expanding colonial program. For these reasons, and others, the British Civil Service has tended to focus its recruitment and selection on public school and university graduates, young and already devoted by tradition to the idea of government service.

In this country there is no such tradition of the glory of government service. As a nation we do not revere politics.

Two studies made some years ago by Dr. Leonard D. White, of the University of Chicago, seem to yield important evidence to bear out this conclusion.

¹ "Public" being practically synonymous in British usage with "private" as we use the term in this country.

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The first study, *The Prestige Value of Public Employment in Chicago*,¹ gives an analysis of distribution of opinion among 5,000 Chicago residents on the subject stated in the title. None of these persons was a public employe.

The results of the study indicate that a cross section of the Chicago public have a substantial preference for employment in private enterprise; that city employes have a poorer reputation than those in private employment in such crucial matters as integrity, competence, courtesy, and attention to duty;² that public employment in Chicago "tends to command the respect of the immature, the uneducated, the foreign born, and the laboring people," while its prestige is low among those in the opposite categories.³ Dr. White believes that the analysis reveals "distrust of the general conditions under which work is performed for the city."⁴

The later study—wider in scope—is entitled *Further Contributions to the Prestige Value of Public Employment*.⁵ Analysis was here made of the opinions of a comparable group of about 7,000 persons in ten cities—not alone on the prestige value of municipal employment in those cities, but also on the comparative prestige value of federal, state, and municipal employment.

Apparently a state of greater confidence in government obtains in communities other than Chicago,⁶ but the figures of the second study "confirm on a national scale the ill repute of municipal employees which was discovered in the first instance in Chicago."⁷ The findings as to relative standing indicate that "the prestige value of federal employment is higher than that of the state, and the prestige of state employment is higher than that of municipal positions."⁸

The notion that in America there is unlimited opportunity for the masses in private industry may be mythical but it is still apparently an active factor in conditioning the national attitude toward what is considered the narrower confines of public service. Although Americans flock to government service in times of depres-

¹ Social Science Studies no. 14. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1929.

² *Ibid.*, p. 140.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁵ Social Science Studies no. 24. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1932.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

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sion when private industry contracts and public enterprise expands this probably represents only an opportunistic adjustment to a practical vocational problem:

Civil service has been an avenue of escape from the more strenuous life. When it was easy to make money, it was usually the timid who sought the security of the service; since the period of unemployment, it has been largely those whom industry has dislocated.¹

Civil service in this country therefore has tended to depend upon the lure of a "good job" for the experienced person, offering security rather than opportunity for advancement. The conclusion of some is that this policy tends to attract middle-aged competence rather than young ambition.

In Great Britain initial examinations incline toward the general educational type, their objective being to seek out the cream of the young college students. This personnel plan provides that special skills be acquired later under government tutelage. In America civil service agencies are likely to give practical tests and set experience qualifications on entry, putting responsibility on the individual for acquiring these qualifications in advance, through school training and in professional and private employment. This tends to recruit an older group.

Evidence of Changing Emphasis in Recruitment Programs in the United States. As previously stated, there have been signs of a tendency in civil service examinations in this country to swing toward the British idea, or at least to experiment with it. Two large-scale examinations given in 1934 and 1936 by the United States Civil Service Commission under the title Junior Civil Service Examiner, which title had originally been used to produce an eligible list for the staff of the commission itself, were mainly tests of general information and intelligence, and were deliberately devised to attract into the federal civil service persons under thirty-

¹ Dimock, Marshall E., Public Administration, in *American Political Science Review*, vol. 27, no. 4, August, 1933, p. 629. This article contains a thoughtful discussion of deterrents and incentives to entering public service.

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five, who are educated but not specialists. These examinations attracted many contestants, largely from the young college group. The registers thus established have been put at the disposal of various federal and state departments. Here would seem to be a definite attempt to recruit on the "government career service" basis.

In the 1934 examination 7,809 persons applied, of whom 3,862 passed; in the 1936 examination 21,650 applied and 7,000 passed.

All states in the union and practically all institutions of higher learning in the country were represented in each examination. The modal age group among the successful contestants in 1934 was twenty to twenty-four, and apparently it was about the same for the 1936 examination.

Men and women have fared approximately alike in percentage of appointments. The registers are available not only to federal departments but to state and local jurisdictions, to private agencies, and to business firms. The federal appointments from the 1934 list are chiefly concentrated in the following departments: Treasury, Veterans Administration, Social Security Board, Department of Justice, the Civil Service Commission, and the Department of Labor.¹

The results of these examinations have been much discussed and opinions about their value differ. No attempt at evaluation can be made here.

Another evidence of recruiting directed toward the college graduate level and on the career basis is the recent announcement by the New York City Municipal Civil Service Commission of the establishment of an administrative service grading from junior administrative assistant at \$3,000 to \$4,000 a year; through administrative assistant at \$4,000 to \$5,000; and senior administrative assistant at \$5,000 to \$6,000 to administrator at \$6,000 and over.

¹ Similar examinations under the same title have been given in the past two or three years by the Civil Service Commissions in New York State, Los Angeles, and Cincinnati.

For a full discussion of these two examinations, see *Government Careers for College Graduates*, by Leonard D. White, from which the above data are taken. Pamphlet no. 8. Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada, Chicago, June, 1937.

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The intent is to establish registers by competitive examination for these titles and to appoint from them in the several city departments as needed.¹ The promotional avenue seems clear, and suggests that the person recruited in the lowest rank may in time go on up to the top.

Wisconsin is in its third year of experimentation with a system of civil service apprenticeships by which the State Bureau of Personnel lends to college seniors up to \$400 a year for continuance of their studies, and appoints them upon graduation to regular public departmental assignments at \$125 per month. The appointees work for an additional year in this apprentice capacity under a trained administrator, spending three and a half hours a week attending lectures by experts on administration. Their appointment to permanent positions in the state civil service is dependent upon the records they make in competitive examinations for which their specialized experience has given them some indirect advantage.²

The Tennessee Valley Authority, the Indian Service, and other federal, state, and county departments have likewise been experimenting with internships in public administration and in public personnel administration.³

Some of those who have been appointed to government positions on a career service theory are already following the traditional pattern of organizing themselves into groups. The Career Service Bulletin, a publication of the Career Service Guild, urges the formation of a National Career Service Organization. Its fundamental purpose would be "to further Career Service in government by the promotion of professional training, the internship method, and the organization and development of public administration as a profession, and to organize potential professional

¹ Amendment of July 1, 1938, to New York City Municipal Civil Service Commission Rules and Classification, revised to June 25, 1927.

² Waldron, Webb, Internes in Government, *in* the Survey Graphic, vol. 27, no. 9, September, 1938, pp. 475-478.

³ *Ibid.*

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public administrators who have had collegiate training and an adequate internship in government."¹

CHARACTERISTICS OF A MODERN CIVIL SERVICE RECRUITMENT PROGRAM

Whether a civil service agency places its emphasis on recruiting able beginners or experienced persons of proven competence, it must be realized that the best of neither group can be attracted without overcoming a certain lack of enthusiasm on the part of the public for government service in general and particularly for those positions which are in the competitive civil service.

The following quotation, however exaggerated in expression, gives some idea of a point of view toward employment in public service that must be combated by a recruiting program:

This [civil service] is a unique system under which it is assumed that people are simple organic compounds, subject to laboratory methods. Examinations are given to these specimens, and on the basis of the results they are neatly catalogued and filed until needed. Orders are filled on the general understanding that short of an Act of God there will be no returns or exchanges. The finished product is a pale, quiet individual, faithful in a dim sort of way, disinclined to originality, but capable within a limited field of an insolence that makes one wonder why it is called "civil."²

Publicity regarding the advantages of government service, accounts of the careers of successful civil servants, information as to the inclusion of more upper salaried jobs in the classified service, information concerning developments in educational and training opportunities in government service—these and other general arguments in favor of taking civil service examinations are a necessary part of a well-rounded recruitment program in the present situation. This phase of recruitment, general in that it stresses ad-

¹ The Guild, 900 Hall of Records, Los Angeles, California, vol. 1, no. 4, August, 1938, p. 1.

² Turn, William, In Defense of Patronage, *in* The Annals, American Academy of Political and Social Science, vol. 189, January, 1937, p. 25.

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vantages of government service in any field of effort, is perhaps peculiarly suited to be a function of the civil service agency itself rather than of the operating department. Information of such a general character is now being disseminated, together with information about specific examinations, through planned newspaper publicity, public addresses, and the radio. Civil service agencies no longer rely exclusively upon the announcements of examinations.

In the successful recruitment program, however, this general approach is followed up by a much more sharply focused campaign. Civil service agencies and departments which they serve not only direct special recruiting efforts at individual educational institutions, professions, and private enterprises in which competent technical and professional personnel are likely to be found, but seek out well-qualified individuals and invite them to file applications for particular positions. In addition to pointing out the benefits of government employment and the opportunity of rendering a needed public service in a specific job, the fact is stressed that it is desirable to establish for each position a list of well-qualified people to "set a pattern" for the position.¹ This kind of individual "scouting" is often the only way of bringing in those really qualified people who may be too absorbed in their own work to pay attention to general announcements.

In a panel session of the American Political Science Association,² Oliver Short gave an illustration of this point. In a civil service examination for a job carrying a salary of \$5,600, recruitment was carried on by the usual methods, through announcements widely posted in public buildings. In addition, Mr. Short wrote letters to several individuals of known fitness, asking them to take the examination. "Some of you gentlemen here got them. . . . three hundred and sixty-five applica-

¹ See pp. 266-270 for further discussion of this point in relation to public welfare positions.

² Philadelphia, December 27-29, 1937. See *University Training for the Public Service*. Pamphlet no. 12. Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada, Chicago, April, 1938, pp. 24-25.

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tions were filed, six people qualified in the examination, and out of the six, five applied as a result of the letters written from my desk."

Selective and skilful individual recruiting for professional or technical positions on the part of departmental administrators tends to offset the kind of recruitment that is carried on for such positions by persons who have a commercial interest in recruitment.

A recent published announcement of a "cram" school in a large metropolitan civil service jurisdiction begins with the following announcement of an examination for the position of investigator:

Opportunities: a secure, lifetime position paying an entrance salary of \$1,200 a year, automatic pay increases yearly, pension, vacations, and other desirable benefits. Several thousand appointments expected as a result of this examination.

Nothing is added about the job itself. The announcement is embellished with an offer of six free scholarships in the "cram" school to those who write the best letter on "Why I Am Proud of Being an American Citizen." It further affirms: "The preparation we provide is so complete and thorough that we are admirably equipping college students to pass the examination who have had no experience whatsoever in social work."

The task of "selling" to individuals the idea of entering competition for a particular position may be undertaken by the civil service agency or by the department which has the appointment to make, but is perhaps peculiarly fitted to be a function of the department.

FACTORS WHICH IMPEDE RECRUITMENT

This discussion has already pointed to certain considerations which make people disinclined to take civil service examinations, such as the low prestige of government service, inadequate compensation at certain levels of work,¹ and lack of opportunity for advancement. To these should be added the individual's dislike

¹ See pp. 91-96 for discussion of compensation.

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of public competition for jobs or his distrust of the integrity of the civil service process. There are also certain factors having to do with the candidate's chances of appointment from eligible lists which act as a drag on a successful recruitment program. These are: discouragement that follows when examinations are taken repeatedly without success in achieving appointment; prevalence of the custom of granting preference to special groups in scoring examinations and making appointments under civil service systems; the idea, generally current, that the provisional appointee is usually the permanent appointee; and the existence of residence requirements.

The candidate who has taken competitive examinations, passed his tests near the top of the list, and has not been appointed, is likely to reach the point after several such disappointing experiences, where the incentive to file his application is not sufficient to offset his increasing pessimism about the outcome. Civil service agencies can do at least four things to prevent development of this kind of attitude on the part of potential competitors. They can give full publicity to the number of appointments expected from the list established for a given position; they can indicate what chance there is that this register will be used by other agencies than the one for which it was established; they can, other circumstances permitting, set entrance qualifications high enough so that unqualified applicants will be refused at the point of admission to the examination rather than go through the discouraging process of failing; and they can grade so that the less well qualified of those admitted to competition will fail outright rather than stand low on a long list from which only a few appointments are to be made.

In some jurisdictions where a high degree of veteran preference prevails, recruiting among non-veterans becomes a thankless task.¹ Moreover, special preference has a way of begetting special preference. Volunteer firemen and other special groups are today pressing claims to have the same preferences extended to them that

¹ See also pp. 61-65, 162, 293.

are extended to veterans. Concessions to these groups would constitute a still further drag on recruiting.

If, at the time of installing a civil service system in a state department, it is known that incumbents will be given a large differential score or other special consideration, outsiders will be discouraged from competing. This is another form of special privilege with its own heritage, backers, and lines of reasoning.¹

An allegation commonly made against civil service systems is that "the 'provisional' always gets the job." While this is far from being true in all jurisdictions, it may come near enough to the truth in certain areas to be a detriment to recruiting. It is said that in one state no provisional appointee has ever been displaced as a result of a competitive examination.

Provisional appointments are often made necessary by delays, sometimes unavoidable, in holding examinations. If the appointing authority seeks out the best-qualified individual for provisional appointment and the provisional appointee has an added advantage of working in the position for which examination is held, it is small wonder either that he often comes out near the top of the eligible list, or that he is appointed if his examination score is high. His permanent appointment may be the logical outcome even though he has been given no special consideration. It is almost certain to be the outcome if examination questions are so chosen that he has a great advantage in answering them, or if he is given score-credit for his provisional employment.² Knowledge, therefore, on the part of potential recruits that provisional appointments have been made is often enough to tip the balance against filing applications for competitive examination.

The requirement that applicants for positions under civil service regulation in a given jurisdiction must have been residents of

¹ Special consideration for incumbents is discussed on pp. 65-69.

² To lessen the danger that provisional appointments will be used as a way of circumventing the application of the merit principle, laws or regulations often provide that experience as a "provisional" can be weighed neither in considering qualifications for entrance to an examination nor in evaluating experience for scoring purposes.

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the jurisdiction for a stated period of months or years not only limits the scope of recruiting but discourages persons from responding.¹ The more narrowly the residence restrictions are drawn, the more they impede successful recruiting. If progress from one job to another in recognition of ability is to be restricted by such arbitrary regulations, the abler individuals will resist the best recruiting efforts and remain in private enterprise where progress is not so impeded.

Increased effectiveness of recruitment programs, then, will depend on several factors, among which the most fundamental is whether government, as an employer, offers as much—reflected in wage rates, opportunities for advancement, and other conditions of work—as do other employers. If it is possible to demonstrate an affirmative answer to this question, the recruiting program will then be furthered by the development of better technical methods of carrying the recruiting message to a potentially interested audience; closer co-operation in recruitment between the civil service agency and department in which appointments are to be made; and elimination of various special restrictions which often make the qualified applicant feel that it is not worth while to compete for positions under civil service.

¹ See pp. 69–72; with reference to public welfare, 233–236.

CHAPTER VII

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

THE process by which civil service agencies select personnel includes, in theory at least, the following four steps:

1. Setting entrance qualifications
2. Giving examinations
3. Certifying eligibles for appointment to positions
4. Checking use and result of probationary period

Each of these four functions involves a successive sifting of the original group of applicants. Sometimes one or more of these selective functions is ruled out by law. If, for example, there is a statutory regulation against making education and experience a prerequisite to admission to examinations, the civil service agency may have no responsibility in relation to entrance requirements beyond passing on claims to citizenship, residence, and moral character.

Sometimes one or another of these functions may become moribund from disuse and neglect. For instance, a probationary period of employment, before permanent status may be confirmed, is usually specified either in a law establishing a civil service agency or in rules established by the agency itself, but its use as a tool of selection is commonly neglected to the point where provision for it might as well have been omitted entirely.¹

In a well-rounded selection procedure, minimum requirements for examination and sometimes also certain desired qualifications are established and advertised for each position or class of positions; a test or combination of tests selects the better qualified candidates and arranges them in order of rank; names of those eligible for appointment are certified to the appointing officer in the order of their rank on the eligible list; persons are appointed on a

¹ See pp. 185-190 for further discussion of this point.

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probationary basis to positions from the group certified in accordance with a prearranged plan of appointment; and appointment is ratified or disallowed at completion of the probationary period, on the basis of performance during that period. The first of these steps, setting requirements for entrance examination, is discussed in this chapter; the other four steps are treated in Chapters VIII through XIII.

The several parts of the selective process are so closely interrelated that a change in type or function in one may affect the type and function of the others. For example, in cases where it is expected that a long list of persons will be certified and the appointing officer has full latitude in choosing for appointment from the entire list, the minimum level set by entrance qualifications and the efficacy of the examination in eliminating the poorest applicants become the most important considerations. If, presumably, only a few are to be certified and the appointing officer has little or no latitude, adequacy of the examination to make fine discriminatory ratings in the upper levels is of more importance than the minima set for entrance or for passing.

FACTORS AFFECTING ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

Theoretically, entrance requirements should be based on a study of the background of persons who have been successful in the position in question. If the correlation between success of employes in the position and specific experience or training is zero, then there is no basis for requiring either that education or that experience, as the case may be, for entrance to competition for the position. Similarly, if the correlation between success in the position and a particular type or length of training or experience is high, then it may be assumed that a background which includes those elements is likely to be associated with future success in the position. Entrance requirements, then, should ideally be weighted in accordance with the weight factor determined by a multiple correlation analysis of job performance with education, experience,

age, and other factors. In practice, it is rarely possible to determine entrance requirements by this method. Either the records of job-performance are inadequate, or it is too costly or time-consuming to undertake such analysis. In the absence of such information, the examining agency and others who help to determine entrance requirements are obliged to make the best guess as to what equipment is most likely to be associated with success.

The freedom to guess, however, may be restricted by a variety of conditions, some legal, some opportunistic, some philosophical. Often the component determining factors are at odds with one another.

Legal Restrictions. Requirements of residence and citizenship, marital status for certain positions, and age limitations are often established by statute. If not so determined, they may be fixed by rule of the civil service agency in concession to well-demonstrated public opinion.

Civil service commissions and agencies conducting departmental merit systems vary widely in their practice of setting age restrictions. Some set both maximum and minimum; some a maximum but no minimum; some mention preferred ages in examination announcements; some make no mention of age at all. In some states age limitations are waived for veterans or disabled veterans.

Some of the factors which influence policy on age requirements, aside from anticipated effect of youth or old age on ability, are the compensation hazard and the accident risk to fellow employes, the retirement hazard and its effect on the soundness of pension plans, and the effect that government action may have in setting precedents in industry.

How civil service practice yields to current public opinion on such points is illustrated in the following statement made by Governor Lehman in signing the bill (February, 1938) which prohibits setting age limits in the classified civil service of New York State: "I realize that it is important to keep the door of the civil service system open to young men and women who wish to enter it as a life career of public service.

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On the other hand, the time has come for government to encourage business to retain in its employ older men and women. . . . Government, therefore, should set a generous example to private business.”¹

Legal provisions governing qualifications are not all negative, some of them positively provide that race, color, political affiliation, marital status, and creed shall not be made a basis for discrimination in competition for positions under the merit system. In the Department of Public Assistance in Pennsylvania “labor union affiliation” is added to the list of items on which discrimination may not be made.² Religion and politics may not be made the basis of discrimination according to the Standards, published by the Social Security Board.

Public Acceptance of Standards for the Position. Not unrelated to legal requirements, in its effect upon entrance requirements, is the matter of public acceptance of the job in question. Time and place enter here. Entrance standards which might seem reasonable to a cosmopolitan center might well be unacceptable to a rural county, or unsuitable in either community after the lapse of several years. There is probably little educational value in setting entrance qualifications far beyond public acceptance, and there may be danger of creating added resistance from the public in so doing. If the position in question is in a professional or a skilled field which has minimum standards determined by state licensing, registration, or certification,³ by state examinations or by any other criteria established by public action, the civil service agency may accept these standards without fear of criticism. In the absence of such criteria, the tendency of the civil service agency is to be lenient. There is little doubt as to what should be at least the basic educational requirements for a civil engineer’s or a physician’s position, but there is lack of agreement as to minimum educational

¹ From *Good Government*, vol. 55, no. 2, March–April, 1938, p. 24.

² See Rules and Regulations for Merit System Personnel Administration, Article 200, p. 3.

³ See pp. 258–261.

requirements for a librarian,¹ or for an investigator in public welfare.

Such established criteria affect, directly and indirectly, through public opinion the entrance requirements which a civil service agency may set up.

Costs. Perhaps the most compelling argument to taxpayers and legislators in favor of reasonably high entrance requirements for civil service examinations is the cost that is imposed by setting low requirements. Assuming that selection of the best for government service is the end desired, it would seem to be needlessly expensive to examine all the way down through mediocrity to incompetence when by the simple device of fixing attributes minimal to a given position, cost may be cut by a very high percentage.

Despite the clear announcement of unusually high entrance requirements for four social work examinations in a recent merit examination given by one state bureau of personnel for the State Department of Public Welfare, the rejections on applications ran from 74 per cent to 83 per cent. The examinations were felt to have produced adequate eligible registers. In view of the number of rejections it is easy to guess how examination costs would have been raised had the entrance qualifications been low.²

The desire to cut costs, however, may in itself not be strong enough to counteract the traditional feeling of legislators that open and unselective competition for public positions is politically desirable, or their feeling, in times of unemployment, that the government service should offer jobs to those who need them.

Supply and Demand. Balance between estimated supply of and demand for personnel for a given position or series of positions influences the level at which qualifications may reasonably be set, and this problem is also tied up with questions of cost. It is inexpe-

¹ The articles in library journals relating to standards, qualifications, equivalents, and other moot points in the area where librarians and civil service meet would be surprisingly applicable to the social work situation with a few changes in terminology. See, for example, the first four articles in *Special Libraries*, vol. 30, no. 2, February, 1939.

² Figures from interview with staff of Social Security Board.

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dient to set qualifications at a level that will produce a list inadequate in numbers even though it may be superior in quality. The result will be either unfilled positions or the repetition of the whole examination process, which means incurring once again the entire expense of advertising, preparing test material, and procuring. Some elements which affect demand and supply are the popularity of government service; content and limits of a particular position in government service as compared to similar positions available in private employment; salary levels and promotional opportunities in public and private service; restrictive residence requirements and opportunities for training for the particular positions in question within the restricted area; emergency needs in government service or in private enterprise which temporarily upset the normal balance of demand and supply; and ineffective or too limited recruiting.

Nature of the Examination. Entrance requirements are determined in part by the type of examination used. In an earlier period the burden of selection was placed almost wholly upon the written examination. Gradual extension of the merit principle to more responsible administrative and executive posts, as well as difficulty of recruiting for government service, have led to development of "unassembled examinations,"¹ sometimes inexactly called non-competitive examinations. In the unassembled examination each candidate is sent the test items which he is to answer and submits evidence from wherever he happens to be of his fitness for the position. The evidence so submitted may be of several types: it may consist only of a complete statement of education and experience with copies of theses, books, and articles attached, which the candidate has previously published; it may include also an interview; it may consist of either or both of the foregoing and in addition an original thesis on an assigned subject.

¹ The term "unassembled" has reference to the fact that candidates are not gathered together in one spot to be examined, as is the case in "assembled" examinations.

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Candidates are graded in order of rank on the basis of the evidence, and certified to the appointing officer. By its very nature the unassembled examination would seem suitable only for use in selection for positions in upper brackets of responsibility and salary, and in instances where intake can be controlled by use of definitely high entrance requirements.

In still another form of appointment on the basis of merit, which is a derivative of unassembled examinations, a statement of qualifications takes the place of tests. This is called appointment by certification, and is useful in the case of certain important positions for which it may not be possible to persuade candidates to file even for an unassembled examination. Here the merit principle is retained, although the competitive element is somewhat further diluted. Under this system the civil service agency may examine and certify to the appointing officer a potential appointee's fitness for a particular post. The appointment is competitive to the extent that the nominated candidate must compete in qualifications with candidates on existing registers; it is non-competitive in the sense that existence of a position to be filled need not be announced nor any type of examination held. When selection is made on this principle, qualifications supersede examinations.

This, for example, is the process by which, through voluntary agreement between the Board and the United States Civil Service Commission, appointment has been made to positions in the "expert" class in the Social Security Board. The Social Security Board nominated to the United States Civil Service Commission a candidate whom it wished to appoint, together with a full statement of qualifications. The Commission's decision on whether or not to certify the name to the Social Security Board was affected in part by whether it thought the candidate met qualification requirements conforming to the duties and rank of the position; in part by the Commission's judgment as to the feasibility of competition at the time; and in part by whether there was a candidate on an existing active register established on a competitive principle for a similar position whose qualifications for the position in question were better than or as good as the nominee's. In the latter event the Com-

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mission would recommend the appointment of the person already on an eligible list.

More recently the term "expert," as designating positions on the staff of the Social Security Board, has been held by ruling of the Comptroller General to apply both to positions and to persons nominated, and if either does not fulfil requirements of the definition the appointment may not be made on the above basis. In other words, the position must be one calling for an expert as further defined and the person to be appointed to it must qualify as an expert for that particular position if he is to be so appointed. (In the absence of a voluntary agreement with the Board, the United States Civil Service Commission is not authorized to pass on the qualifications of the nominee, although it has full control over the status of the position.) Furthermore, a person certified and appointed as expert to one position may not be transferred to another except by competitive examination or by qualifying anew for another position which is also so defined.

In these requirements is seen the care now taken jointly by the United States Civil Service Commission, the Comptroller General, and the Social Security Board to see that the privilege of this looser form of appointment should not be abused. Originally, by agreement between the Board and Commission, no positions under \$3,200 were classed as expert. At present, the only expert positions not under civil service are those of part-time consultants.¹

The level and nature of entrance qualifications may also be affected by restrictions imposed by law or by expediency on the use of some type of examination procedure. There are, for example, jurisdictions in which use of the interview as a weighted part of the examination is prohibited. In such a situation, when the probable volume of applicants for an important post is such as to rule out use of essay examinations for reasons of cost and time, the civil service agency may feel that the combination of short answer written examination and restricted oral interview² will fall short of

¹ Data taken from correspondence with members of the staff of the Social Security Board and of the U. S. Civil Service Commission.

Attorneys in the Social Security Board are also not subject to civil service jurisdiction, not because they or their positions are classed as "expert," but because as a group they are exempted under Section 703 of the Social Security Act.

² See pp. 138-143, 152-157 for a discussion of these two types of examinations and their uses.

testing qualities such as leadership, which may be essential in a given position. It would seem then expedient to throw a large part of the burden of elimination upon entrance requirements. High entrance requirements yield a group of successful candidates who have at least been exposed to a given level of training or experience; a minimum of excellence in past performance may therefore be presumed in the majority of candidates who can meet the requirements.

Degree of Freedom of Competition. Another and very important determinant of the nature of entrance requirements is the degree of freedom of competition desired. The earlier tendency, as already indicated, was toward giving the public at large a chance to compete for government positions. Only in technical fields were specific requirements of education and experience made, and even there weight was usually placed on experience rather than on general education or technical training. The self-made man was to have a chance as opposed to the "brain truster." Although the recent tendency has been toward selective competition on the basis of merit, evidence that much of the old point of view remains is seen in the hesitation of most civil service agencies to set a higher entrance level than high school graduation even for professional positions and by the tendency to rate experience higher than education.

The point of view of one group which opposes high educational entrance qualifications is well exemplified in the following quotation from an editorial in *The Chief*¹ entitled *For Intellectuals*:

According to the standards established by the "intellectuals" less than three per cent of the nation's adult population should be entitled to positions which ordinarily can be well-filled and well-managed by the so-called "ordinary" people.

The *Chief* has no quarrel with college trained people. But it disapproves of extending a monopoly on opportunity to them. Their

¹ Issue of Friday, July 29, 1938, p. 4. The *Chief* is the organ of the Civil Service Forum in New York City, an alliance of 150,000 federal, state, and city employes.

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higher education, if absorbed, should easily show up the untrained non-college individual in competition. But both groups should be permitted to compete for the jobs.

Sometimes the law sets the degree to which competition is open, in relation to experience and training.

The newly established Personnel Department of Connecticut, the state Civil Service Commission of Ohio, and the Civil Service Commission of Massachusetts (save where exception in Massachusetts is provided for by statute) are permitted by law to set entrance requirements of experience but not of education in giving examinations. The Employment Board for the Department of Public Assistance in Pennsylvania is prohibited by statute from requiring qualifications of education or experience. The existence of an economic depression may have influenced legislatures in these states to revert recently to the idea that civil service should not favor educational castes.

Sometimes openness of competition is maintained only by rulings or tradition of the civil service agency. Frequently a civil service agency may prefer high entrance requirements on theoretical grounds, but set them at a low level as a concession to public opinion.

Since the value of high educational requirements for entrance to examination has been for long so generally accepted by students of government and the professions, it may be worth calling attention to some new and disturbing evidence from the educational field which seems to have bearing on the question. The Student and His Knowledge,¹ a much discussed Carnegie study, shows a degree of variability of student knowledge at various high school and college levels which makes it at least debatable whether the practice of setting high school or college graduation as an entrance requirement for civil service examinations can be defended. How far does the requirement ensure even a minimum of knowledge?

¹ Learned, William S., and Wood, Ben D., *The Student and His Knowledge*. Bulletin no. 29. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, New York, 1938. This study was based on tests taken by some 55,000 students from 1928-1932.

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The report indicates that the Bachelor of Arts may be inferior in knowledge of basic subjects to 10 per cent or more of high school graduates. Or the student at the 10th percentile of his class-ranking on achievement tests in one college may compare favorably with the student at the 90th percentile of his class in another college.

In a review of the report,¹ Dr. M. W. Richardson of the University of Chicago concludes:

It seems quite fair, from the evidence presented in the various tables and charts, to state that a reasonably good three-hour objective examination given to an individual will yield more information about his knowledge and capacities than will a nicely engraved diploma, a transcript of "grades," and a letter of recommendation from a dean. The term "graduation from an accredited college" has little meaning. The civil service examiner may profitably ignore the academic record and proceed to test the applicant's knowledge. No other equivalent for college graduation has any meaning.

The most compelling argument for establishing college graduation as a prerequisite to examination for positions of professional character (or for lower positions in a hierarchy in which the upper positions are professional) is that college graduation is usually a prerequisite to professional training. The greater the extent to which a promotional system is predicated upon the doctrine of career service in government, the more essential it becomes that rank-and-file workers in sub-professional positions have the necessary basic education to which professional training can later be added.

Other factors that may influence the degree of openness of competition provided for are the purpose of the examination and the strength of interested pressure groups. For example, a series of examinations, particularly those held when a department first comes under civil service control, may be given only for the purpose of weeding out the least competent members of the incum-

¹ *In* the Civil Service Assembly News Letter for July, 1938, vol. 4, no. 7, p. 13.

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bent staff. In such event, only members of the staff are admitted to examination and the original step in selection is thus automatically predetermined. An examination so limited is known as a "qualifying examination."¹ Two groups are likely to present a united front in favor of qualifying examinations as opposed to examinations on the basis of open or selective competition. If the incumbent staff has been selected on a patronage basis, and notably if an election is in the offing, the political sponsors of the staff are likely either to want them "blanketed-in" or given only a qualifying examination. Or the group of present employes, themselves either unorganized or organized, may seek to preserve their status quo. In some cases they may have the power of a national labor union movement behind them.

With reference to the recent executive orders (1938) that brought most of the New Deal agencies under civil service regulations,² *Newsweek*³ comments: "Opposition newspapers also pointed out that the act will freeze thousands of present Democratic job-holders into permanent positions, but they failed to mention that this is traditionally the only basis on which a party in power will agree to such reforms." The incumbents of the positions involved in these executive orders are being inducted into the civil service system in a manner which represents a compromise between two objectives. Each incumbent may take a qualifying non-competitive examination. If he achieves a passing grade, he secures permanent civil service status. If he does not make a passing grade and is recommended for the position by his superior, he may still retain the position but does not have the protection of civil service status.

¹ The term "qualifying" is sometimes used in a similar but not identical sense as relating to the function of one part of the test process when the examination is on an open competitive basis for incumbents and outsiders alike. Thus in certain civil service agency jurisdictions where an open competitive examination is given, an interview is part of the test process, but the score from it is not included in the test score. On the basis of the interview, however, candidates may be disqualified from the list of eligibles. It is used for elimination only. Such an interview is called a "qualifying" oral. See also p. 153.

² See p. 43.

³ *Newsweek*, July 11, 1938, p. 7.

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USE OF DISCRETIONARY POWER IN INTERPRETING REQUIREMENTS

There is wide divergence in the rigidity with which examining agencies apply such minimum entrance requirements as they may themselves establish. In the practice of some agencies entrance requirements are considered only as grounds on which the candidate *may* be refused admittance to an examination. The examining agency uses its discretion as to whom to admit and whom to exclude, tending toward liberality of interpretation on detail when the total background of the candidate seems suited to the position. When this philosophy prevails, the function of announced requirements is primarily to discourage unqualified candidates from applying.

There are other agencies which apply their announced requirements literally, one week of age over the established limit, or of experience short of the required amount, giving grounds for rejection. While there is something to be said for impartiality of treatment, the former emphasis seems more intelligent and likely to further the real purpose of the examination.

Perhaps the important consideration to bear in mind in considering the level of entrance requirements for any position is that, given a good supply of well-equipped candidates eager for the chance to compete, the general burden of evidence is in favor of establishing realistically high entrance qualifications. Such qualifications tend to place government service at a high level in the minds of the general public; to help professions and technical fields to gain public recognition; to minimize the necessity of putting undue weight on examination procedures that are relatively untried; and to be desirable for reasons of economy. However, when particular circumstances such as legal restrictions, adverse public opinion, or inadequate supply of candidates necessitate or urge relatively low entrance requirements, or none, all is not necessarily lost. The other processes of selection may take on a heavier share of the burden of elimination and in many cases can be made

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to compensate to some degree for what the adopted entrance requirements cannot achieve.¹

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS AS APPLIED TO PERSONS PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED

Somewhere in this book it is appropriate to include mention of the special problem of the physically handicapped in relation to employment in civil service. The subject is treated at this point, following the discussion already given concerning entrance requirements, although it is equally pertinent to a discussion of physical examinations in selection of employes, or of the nature of written and oral tests.

Studies of the handicapped indicate that 12 to 15 persons out of 1,000 in the population of the United States have some permanent physical handicap.² Some of these handicaps preclude any sort of employment; some are disabling only for certain occupations; others may be counteracted if the individual is provided with artificial parts for the body or with machinery especially adapted for his manipulation, such as a Braille switchboard for blind telephone operators. In the practice of many civil service agencies no special provision is made for handicapped persons, either by way of waiving general physical requirements for special positions; by way of making it possible for persons who are visually or manually handicapped to take the ordinary written examinations; or by way of giving preference in appointments. A notable exception to this last generalization is almost universally found in the case of disabled veterans.

There are those who feel that in relation to selection for government positions one rule of physical fitness should apply to all; others feel that the present lack of special provision for the handicapped amounts to discrimination.

¹ See pp. 146-150, 172-174.

² Kratz, John A., Vocational Rehabilitation, *in* Social Work Year Book, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1939, pp. 472-477.

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Few would argue that special provision should be made by government for those who, were they to be employed in the particular job to which they are seeking appointment, could not maintain a level of performance equal to that of normal persons. Many handicapped persons would not desire such preference; nor would most advocates of liberalized requirements for the handicapped favor special legislative action to protect those handicapped persons who have achieved civil service eligibility against discrimination by appointing officers.

On the side of those who believe that special regulations should not favor the handicapped are the arguments that to employ them might slow up production, lessen efficiency, reduce transferability, increase sick leave and pension costs, and put the government in a paternalistic role. On the other side is the anomalous situation that government, through its programs for the blind, for disabled veterans, and for vocational rehabilitation of the handicapped has already embarked on a program of giving special consideration to this section of the population; and that through its various agents it is in effect asking industry to do what it refuses to do—provide jobs for the handicapped so far as their handicap is not vocationally disabling. By law the federal government requires co-operation between the rehabilitation and public employment offices in those states which receive aid for the rehabilitation program from the United States Department of Labor. Yet it makes no requirement for co-operation between the public agency for rehabilitation and the chief "employment" office for its own departments, the United States Civil Service Commission.

A few civil service agencies have held special examinations or made other special provision for certain classes of handicapped persons.

The United States Civil Service Commission gave an examination on January 12, 1938, for positions in the office of Education, Department of the Interior, which was open to those experienced in Braille; the examination was announced as for "Assistant Clerk Stenographer—

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Blind." Previous to holding that special examination, which was limited to the blind, the commission in 1936 opened one of its regular un-assembled examinations—that for Principal Administrative Officer—to blind persons.¹

In New York State, physical requirements for examinations were waived in one examination for a number of blind dictaphone operators. They came out high on the eligible list but were not appointed. The procedure was then somewhat changed. The New York State Civil Service Commission agreed to give qualifying examinations for any blind dictaphone operator for whom provisional appointment could be secured. Several of the original candidates received permanent appointment in public offices in the state by this method.²

A recent amendment to the New York State Education Law provides that the Bureau of Rehabilitation of the Department of Education shall be consulted and that its rulings shall be binding on civil service commissions in relation to the physical fitness of any handicapped person who has been rejected on grounds of his handicap either as an applicant for civil service examinations in the state or as an eligible for civil service appointment. It further requires that if the disability is not found by the Bureau of Rehabilitation to be vocationally handicapping for the position in question, the examining agency may be required to make such special provisions for examination (extra time or special mechanical devices or an amanuensis) as may be necessary to insure competitive equality in examination for the handicapped individual.³

In the jurisdiction of a limited number of civil service agencies, the presence of a physical handicap is not disqualifying in physical examinations except where it is vocationally disabling or progressive. For example, according to the regulations of some examining agencies, a man with a wooden leg would pass a physical test for certain positions where a man with varicose veins would be rejected, on the theory that while the disability in the former case is fixed, in the latter case it might either be progressive, or pos-

¹ Data from correspondence with staff of the U. S. Civil Service Commission, February 9, 1939.

² Data from conference with staff of the New York Council for the Blind.

³ An Act to Amend the Education Law, in Relation to Additional Duties of Commission with Respect to Physically Disabled Persons Applying in the State Civil Service. Chapter 610 of Laws of New York, April 9, 1938.

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sibly that it might be improved by treatment, after which the candidate could be accepted in a subsequent examination.

Those who work with the handicapped agree that physically disadvantaged persons should be considered as individual problems of vocational readjustment and in relation to specific vocational opportunities, and not be rehabilitated or considered for employment in classes. This would seem to indicate that the principle embodied in the New York State Education Law mentioned above is a feasible one.¹

¹ For general discussion of this topic see Civil Service and the Handicapped, by Thomas P. McAuliffe, *in* the Rehabilitation Review, September-October, 1937, pp. 182-193.

CHAPTER VIII

TYPES OF EXAMINATIONS

THE chief problem of civil service examiners is to devise the kind of tests and means of scoring them that will arrange competitors for a given position most nearly in order of their qualifications.

Which are "the best qualified" is a matter of judgment. Examinations are tools wherewith evidence is assembled upon which such judgment can be based. In a civil service examination a judgment of the candidate's total knowledge and ability in relation to a given field of activity is based upon his performance in relation to problems which are in part, at least, selected as samples. The examiner infers that if the candidate can work out a sample problem better than his competitor, he may also be able to work out better that larger obligation for which the test item is in some sense an equivalent.

DEFINITION OF RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Whether an examination succeeds in providing the basis for judging relative qualifications of candidates depends then largely upon the degree of consistency and accuracy with which the sum of the special tests of knowledge and abilities selected represents the total qualifications needed in the position. The terms used by examiners to describe these characteristics of tests are "reliability" and "validity."

Since these two terms have an exact technical meaning, are often used inexactly, and will be used frequently in this discussion, a definition is perhaps necessary at this point.

Both the "reliability" and "validity" of a test refer to the exactness with which a test can measure, but they refer to separate qualities.

Reliability of a test, according to the technical staff of the Board of

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Examinations of the University of Chicago,¹ refers to the exactness with which a test can measure whatever it does measure, or to its consistency of measurement. Reliability depends upon the freedom of the test from the influence on scores of certain factors which might make the same test yield different results given a second time to the same or to a comparable group: for example, (1) factors in the test itself, such as confused directions or ambiguous questions; (2) factors affecting the person taking the test, such as his physical state, or the temperature; (3) factors concerned with grading, such as differences of opinion of readers. As a general rule, the reliability of a carefully prepared test tends within limits to increase with its length.

Validity of a test refers to the exactness with which the test measures what it purports to measure. A test originally devised for medical social workers in a hospital may be a completely reliable and valid test. If the same test were used for medical consultants in a public welfare department it might still be completely reliable but would lose a good deal of its validity since the thing for which it is testing, or its criterion, has changed, and it may not accurately measure for the new criterion.

Two elements that determine validity of a test are its reliability, and the correlation between the test and its criterion. For example, the validity of a test item on "supervision" depends upon (1) the consistency with which the test would produce the same score from persons with the same ability; and (2) the correlation between the test and someone's estimate of what are right techniques of supervision. How right that estimate is, determines the accuracy of the criterion. Upon the accuracy of the criterion depends the usefulness of the test as a measuring device but not its validity. A test may be valid for a given criterion if it is reliable and has high correlation with the criterion, even if the criterion is inaccurate.

It is apparent, then, that a test is not likely to be valid without being reliable; the outward limit of its reliability is one measure of the outward limit of its validity. The converse is not true. A test may be exceedingly reliable and yet have little or no validity, because it does not accurately predict the criterion.

The final practical test of reliability of all examinations is consistency of measurement.

¹ Manual of Examination Methods of the University of Chicago, by the Technical Staff, Board of Examinations, University of Chicago. 2d ed., August, 1937, pp. 7-16.

See also L. L. Thurstone's *The Reliability and Validity of Tests*. Edwards Brothers, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1937, pp. 50-56.

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The final practical test of validity of civil service examinations is capacity to measure occupational ability—but this presupposes that we have norms against which to check the applicant's performance. This presumption leads back to the importance of job content or analysis which was discussed in Chapter V and will be discussed again in Part Two with special reference to the social worker.

The arguments among technicians as to what test or combination of tests is most useful in selecting personnel for a given position are largely conditioned by how reliable and valid they think a particular test or "battery" of tests can be made. Opinions on this subject differ. The following pages attempt to give enough of the pros and cons of opposing points of view so that the uninitiated may at least understand the argument, although perhaps not be qualified to render an opinion.

COMPONENTS OF THE EXAMINATION

Modern civil service examinations usually consist of some combination of a statement of education and experience, which is graded and scored, a written examination, and an oral test.¹ Supplementary to this for special types of positions may be original published material or an original thesis written for the examination, a physical examination, an investigation of character or personal fitness, or a performance test.

The physical examination or a certificate of health is customarily required for positions involving the performance of manual labor, or, as they are sometimes described, for the "athletic services." In some jurisdictions it is part of all examinations. The requirement is commonly made also in situations where absence of age restrictions or the existence of liberal pension and sickness provisions makes this an advisable precaution for reasons of economy.

Any or all of the components of the examination may be given weight in the final score. Data which are submitted by candidates on their education and experience may or may not be verified

¹ See pp. 48-49 and Appendix.

and references may or may not be secured, although reference sources are almost always required on civil service applications. While the general public and candidates for civil service positions are under the impression that educational records of candidates are always verified and references consulted by the examining agency, in common practice this kind of "follow-up" is often omitted, particularly where large numbers of people are being examined. Securing such information is exceedingly expensive when large numbers of candidates are involved. Owing to the perfunctory nature of many replies, results are often incommensurate with the effort and expense of securing them. When the examining agency does not check experience and secure references, and the appointing officer has some leeway in appointment, there is obviously every reason why the latter should make careful investigation both of veracity of statements and quality of previous performance of candidates certified for appointment.

Some civil service agencies put the burden of proof of education on the applicant by requiring that he furnish a transcript of academic courses taken. Others verify education and consult references only for the small group who are certified to the appointing officer. When references are consulted they may be made available to the appointing officer, but are not customarily represented in the candidate's score except occasionally in the case of small examinations for important posts, where an attempt is made to evaluate quality of experience as well as quantity. It is not suggested that civil service agencies feel that careful follow-up of references is not a necessary pre-employment procedure, but rather that they feel that it costs a great deal to get even perfunctory references on all candidates; that perfunctory references should not be weighed in arriving at a test score; and that adequate references can be more easily secured by the appointing officer for the small group of eligibles who are finally certified to him. They therefore often either get references for those certified only or leave this responsibility to the appointing officer who can handle it on a more individual basis.

Following up on all applications when costs are not excessive is, however, desirable in order to eliminate the small group who misrepresent their experience or against whom definite charges of overt former misconduct are brought. A further check against criminal record is often

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achieved by fingerprinting all applicants to examinations. In some jurisdictions public sentiment would not countenance this method, while in others it would not be questioned.

UNASSEMBLED AND ASSEMBLED EXAMINATIONS

Where "top" positions are involved, certain agencies have come to prefer selection by means of the unassembled examination.¹ Whether this is a desirable development is a much-debated point among test experts. Setting high entrance requirements in relation to such positions usually limits the number of candidates, and the size of the resultant group makes individualization possible. It is felt by some that this is important when substantial administrative, executive, or technical posts are at stake. Some attempt to determine quality as well as extent of educational preparation can be made when comparatively few individuals are concerned; references on work performance can be individually followed up; original compositions can be evaluated, and personal qualities investigated. For these reasons the United States Civil Service Commission, for example, although its rules provide that assembled examinations be given "wherever practicable," uses the unassembled examination for nearly all positions carrying a salary of over \$3,200.

The United States Civil Service Commission is experimenting with and developing a plan of supplementing the candidate's statement of experience in unassembled examinations with a recorded interview. Since candidates from all over the country may compete, this would involve setting up a traveling board or boards. The Commission has for some years employed traveling investigators who secure references from former employers by word of mouth in examinations for law enforcement positions, hoping thereby to secure fuller and more reliable statements than would be submitted in written form. It is considering broadening the examination area in which these investigations are conducted.²

¹ See pp. 115-117.

² Information secured from staff interviews. The Standards, published by the Social Security Board, permits unassembled examinations under certain conditions. See Appendix.

Attributes of the unassembled examination which on the positive side may be considered virtues, may on the negative become vices. In a process so individualized there are too many variables to make it possible to arrive at standardization. The scoring of training and experience can be based on a prearranged scale—and therefore made more objective—far more easily on a quantitative basis than on a qualitative basis. It is also difficult to weigh and score original essays against one another. It is even sometimes difficult to determine whether such compositions are entirely original. Evaluation of references involves evaluation of the writer as well as of the person whom they concern. All these factors make it difficult to standardize the values given in unassembled examinations. The fact that standardization of scoring for unassembled examinations is difficult not only makes relative rankings resulting from scoring open to question even when honestly and painstakingly arrived at, but opens the door to suspicion of favoritism, political manipulation of scores, and other similarly unsavory charges, often undeserved. Pressure groups lustily assail the use of unassembled examinations and charge that they are too often the means of “freezing” a person serving under provisional appointment into a job which he could not secure through an assembled examination. For this reason a commission making wide use of the unassembled examination needs to be one which enjoys public confidence and which has behind it a record of distinctive service. Some persons who are associated with merit programs favor the extension of the unassembled examination to a larger number of positions; others—and the technicians are largely in this group—are opposed on the ground that they are not in reality examinations at all.

It is to the credit of the United States Civil Service Commission that there has been so little criticism of its widespread use of unassembled examinations. State and local agencies usually avoid them save for the unusual job where unusual procedure can be defended. The Maryland Department of Employment and Regis-

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tration has probably done more experimenting with this type of examination than any other state merit agency.

The assembled examination, in which the candidates come to an appointed center on a given date to compete, has obvious advantages for most positions. Conditions of taking the examination can be made uniform. Authenticity of authorship can be assured. Anonymity can be preserved if necessary or desirable. The basis of scoring can be standardized within certain limits set by the form of tests used. Unless the number of applicants prohibits it, a performance test, a physical examination, or even an interview, can all be given at the same time and place as the written examination, if these steps are to be part of the examination procedure.

Some of the disadvantages of assembled examinations have to do with difficulty in getting properly qualified people to take them; others, with their limitations as measuring rods of excellence. Also, it is hard to estimate in advance how many people will apply for an assembled examination. In good times many persons who feel no economic urge to get a new job are deterred from filing applications because of a natural dislike for taking examinations, distaste for the publicity which attends open competition, and similar considerations. These individuals might have been willing to apply if filing a statement of qualifications were all that was necessary. In hard times, however, an assembled examination that would normally attract 50 to 75 persons may draw thousands. Administrative flexibility as well as some financial leeway is necessary to cope with such variability in numbers.

Despite objections raised against assembled examinations, they seem to be indispensable at least in selecting personnel for rank-and-file positions. Civil service commissions are making valiant efforts to assure fairness and objectivity in their use. To this end they are careful to maintain secrecy in preparing test material; to write instructions and pose questions in such a way as to give equal chance to all contestants; in some cases to maintain anonymity of the candidate not only when scoring written papers but throughout

the examination process; to score objectively and to publish results; and to validate the various devices used in testing. There is left, however, much unexplored territory in giving assembled examinations, much that is subjective and unstandardized in all parts of the test process and many practices in common use in some civil service agencies that have long since been discarded by the more careful and critical examiners.

FUNCTIONS OF THE SEVERAL PARTS OF ASSEMBLED EXAMINATIONS

Of the several devices before mentioned—written examinations, oral examinations, grading of background, and performance tests—the last mentioned is most limited in scope and yet may be the most reliable. It sets up in the examination room a test of skill which simulates what would be required in the position. Obviously, it can be used only in relation to positions involving reproducible work such as clerical or manual duties. The applicant is asked to perform routine tasks such as operating an office machine or constructing a model from a set of plans. He is then scored on such bases as his speed, his accuracy, or the appearance of the result. The scoring can be standardized and made objective because the products are comparable. Allowing for difficulty in duplicating job conditions and for the variable of “examination jitters,” the results of such a test, if well administered, give a basis for relative ranking of performance. Performance tests are usually combined with other types of tests to give a better rounded picture of the applicant’s attributes. They are generally conceded to be impracticable for testing most professional or administrative skills.

Of the three other types of testing devices, the written examination is more closely associated in the public mind with the term “civil service” than is any other single function or any other part of the selective process. It was originally always of the free answer or essay type, supplemented by a performance test where possible. Although the written examination has been supplanted en-

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tirely in certain types of examination, it is still a very important tool in selection. In some examinations it is supplemented by other procedures; in some, its form and use have been changed.

The written examination is commonly used to test knowledge and the various intellectual processes, and is often employed as a first eliminant of the less well qualified candidates. The interview is used to grade appearance, personality, and other factors which the written examination cannot test; and the evaluation of experience is used to grade presumed equipment. Sometimes the line of demarcation between the functions of these three is blurred. For example, the interview may be used to supplement the candidate's statement about his training and experience rather than to grade factors of personality.

Assembled examinations may include a combination of all three of these or of any two, or they may be restricted to a written or an oral test only. Where more than one test element is used, the scores from component parts are usually combined into a single score for each candidate.¹

The old charge that grinds and plodders make good examination passers is more or less defeated by the use of the oral test to serve as a check on the traditional written examination. "Cram schools" become less of a hazard to the establishment of a good list, as examiners include material in written examinations which tests ability to complete difficult mental processes as well as that which tests knowledge of fact. In other words, assembled examinations are improving. It is still true and probably will always be true, that the competition, publicity, and time limitations attendant on assembled examinations entail a handicap for certain individuals. Whether these are always the individuals who would not succeed in the position has yet to be determined.

¹ See pp. 171-176 for discussion of weighting scores from parts of an examination in arriving at a final score.

CHAPTER IX

WRITTEN TESTS

MOST of the controversial storm about merit examinations and about civil service in general has centered around the written test, and much of its unpopularity may be laid at the door of those who prepared tests in earlier days, when techniques were faultier and the merit principle less conscientiously applied. Examination questions have been known to be designed to favor special groups. Catch questions have been devised to snare the unwary. Unvalidated, irrelevant, and unsound material which purports to test knowledge, intelligence, aptitude, or personality is even now incorporated in some written examinations. These factors and many others have tended to put the written examination in bad repute. Many test experts feel, however, that, properly devised, administered, checked, scored, and related to other parts of the examination, written tests are the backbone of the selective process.

When written examinations are used as an eliminating agent to weed out the more obviously inferior candidates—and this is often the case—only those who survive the written test go on to other parts of the examination.

The items¹ of which written examinations are composed are selected not only to test various elements of knowledge or ability but also to pose problems of varying degrees of difficulty in relation to these in order to differentiate the more from the less able candidates. It is a generally accepted principle that some questions should be of extreme difficulty for the grade of position involved, not for the purpose of harassing the ordinary man, but to aid in

¹ The term "item" is used by examiners to designate single test elements rather than the term "question" since many test problems are posed in the form of a full or partial statement and not in question form.

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bringing the exceptional individual to the top even though he may not have the right answers to *all* questions.

Written examinations are of two general types: essay, or free answer examinations, and the short answer examination in any of its various forms. These two types are sometimes described respectively as "subjective" and "objective" examinations, the description referring to subjectivity and objectivity with which scoring of each is associated. These are poor terms, however, for subjectivity in scoring free answer examinations can be reduced somewhat with time and care, while some subjectivity often goes into preparing keys for scoring short answer examinations.

ESSAY TESTS

The essay or free answer type of written examination¹ consists of a topic, or series of topics, on which the candidate is asked to elaborate, sometimes under imposed restrictions, sometimes *ad lib*. An essay type examination may include only one or two such topics, or dozens of brief essays may be required. The characteristic of this type of test is that, long or short, the candidate is asked to organize his thinking and produce a rounded response.

The following examples of essay items in art and history respectively are taken from the Manual of Examination Methods of the University of Chicago.² These illustrations represent two types of restricted essay item, requiring a reasoned statement in the content of the response.

Item 1

The photographs above represent the treatment of the same subject (the Crucifixion) by artists of four different periods or "schools." In the spaces below, identify the "school" of each period, and give in each case three reasons for your judgment.

¹ With reference to public welfare, see pp. 335-339.

² Manual of Examination Methods of the University of Chicago, by the Technical Staff, Board of Examinations, University of Chicago, 2d ed., August, 1937. Used by permission; published by the University of Chicago Bookstore. Item 1 is taken from p. 116 and item 2 from p. 132.

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Figure A is because:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Figure B is because:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Item 2

Give a brief but adequate summary of the civilization of the Hellenistic period . . . ; that is, sketch in first the political and economic background, then characterize successively the various forms of thought (philosophy, science, religion) and expression (literature, sculpture, painting, and architecture). You are expected to make general statements, but also to substantiate them by reference to definite names of persons and places, dates, works, and accomplishments.

Try to spend at least ten minutes in marshalling your facts and planning your organization. Organization and presentation as well as factual material will be taken into consideration by the readers.

SHORT ANSWER TESTS

The short answer examination may take many forms,¹ but in each the candidate is asked to make his response to each item in the form of a check, a symbol, a numeral, or a word, in order to indicate a correct answer, an error, an inconsistency, a sequitur or non sequitur, or a choice. In taking a short answer examination, he may need to organize his thinking, but he does not need to organize his response. Most intelligence and aptitude test material is of the short answer type.

The most commonly used types of short answer problems are known as simple recall, completion, matching, true-false, and multiple choice items. As might be expected from the terminology, in the first of these forms the problem for the candidate is one of recall of facts rather than recognition of correctness or incorrectness.

¹ With reference to public welfare, see pp. 339-369.

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The same is true to a lesser extent in completion items, while in the matching, true-false, and multiple choice forms both correct and incorrect responses are given and the candidate is asked to recognize and discriminate, rather than to recall a correct answer. In the last three types—matching, true-false, and multiple choice items—the amount of choice given the candidate varies. Each of the prevalent general types of short answer items tests for a different kind of ability; therefore short answer examinations are usually composed of a number of items of each type.

Short answer examinations may be set up in parts, with separate starting and stopping points for each part, the division into parts being made according to subject matter, type of item used, or both. Or they may be constructed as single units with one starting and stopping signal only, although component test items may be of a variety of sorts. This latter type of examination is called an "omnibus" examination. If in an omnibus examination the items of each sort recur at regular intervals throughout the examination, but without regard to increasing difficulty of items, the whole is described as being of the "cyclical omnibus" type; if the cycles of types present problems of increasing difficulty the test is known as a "spiral omnibus" examination.

Choice as to which of these structural forms is used depends on such factors as whether the subject matter is to cover widely different fields of knowledge, whether part scores are differentially weighted, or whether scoring is to be done by machine. The omnibus examination is simpler to administer but less adaptable to a variety of purposes.

The timing plan for any short answer examination, particularly one in which items are arranged in order of increasing difficulty, will determine whether the test is primarily one of capacity in subject matter, or one of speed, or of both. If the examination is so planned that only a few can finish, speed is obviously a factor to be measured. Other considerations besides the time element, however, are factors in deciding how many items a test should in-

clude. These relate to the question of test reliability and to the number of candidates to be examined. It has been noted that within reasonable limits the more items the test contains the more reliable it tends to be. Moreover, if a large number of candidates are to be examined, a test composed of many items will lessen the chance that multiple tie scores will result.

Simple Recall Items. In a simple recall item a single question is asked and a space left in which the candidate enters his response by inserting a word, date, or figure, as follows: "In what year was the 18th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States repealed? _____."

Completion Items. In a completion problem the candidate is given a statement or set of facts with some one key word or series of words omitted and is asked to supply what is missing. The next two items¹ are of the completion type, although the second is perhaps more properly termed a "definition" problem since the blank space is not actually included in the test sentence:

<i>Directions</i>	<i>Test</i>
<i>Item 1.</i> In the blank in the accompanying sentence write the one word which has been omitted.	Norman Thomas belongs to the _____ political party.
<i>Item 2.</i> In the blank space under the accompanying phrase write the term (one word) to which that phrase applies.	A simple unlearned response . . . _____

Matching Items. In matching problems the candidate is given two series of concepts and asked to indicate as directed which are related or contrasted, as follows:²

¹ Adapted from the Manual of Examination Methods of the University of Chicago, p. 39.
² *Ibid.*, p. 73. Adapted.

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Place the number of the term before the descriptive statement to which it applies. There are more terms than statements.

1. Exogamy
2. Polygamy
3. Polygyny
4. Endogamy
5. Monogamy
6. Polyandry

—— In the Hawaiian Islands there formerly existed a form of marriage wherein a group of brothers were married to a group of sisters, each sister being the wife of all the brothers, and each brother the husband of all the sisters.

—— In Eastern and Southeastern Asia, particularly in Tibet, it is common practice for brothers to take the same wife.

—— In New Caledonia, chiefs have from five to thirty wives and their wealth and authority varies with this ownership.

—— Among certain of the American Indian tribes each clan is distinguished by a totem and two persons of the same totem cannot marry.

There are many varieties of matching tests and they can be made quite difficult. It is usual to include more items in one of the series than in the other in order to minimize the opportunity for successful guessing after a few sets of items have been paired.

True-False Items. In the true-false problem (sometimes called alternate response), the candidate is given a statement and asked to indicate (by writing, checking, or including within a ring T or F for true or false, "yes" or "no," or + or —) whether or not the statement is correct. The following¹ are illustrations:

<i>Directions</i>	<i>Test</i>
<i>Item 1.</i> Put a plus (+) sign in the line before the statement if it is true; a minus (—) if it is false.	—— Sterilization of all feeble-minded persons would eliminate feeble-mindedness from the population in one generation.
<i>Item 2.</i> Indicate by the use of T (true) F (false) and also by CT (converse true) or CF (converse false) whether the accompanying statement is true or false <i>and also</i> whether the converse is true or false.	—— ——— All rectangles are parallelograms.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17 and p. 21. Adapted.

True-false items are comparatively easy to construct, can be scored quickly and objectively, and are adapted to sampling a wide range of knowledge in a short space of time. They do, however, open the door to guesswork, perhaps more than any other form of short answer item. Some correction for guessing is often made in the scoring plan.¹

Multiple Choice Items. In multiple choice items the candidate is given a series of statements with reference to a particular subject and asked to indicate which is the correct, the incorrect, the best, the most or the least accurate, as follows:²

- | | |
|--|--|
| <i>Place a cross in the blank before the best inference.</i> | <p>The spinal cord of a frog is severed near the lower end. A visual stimulus which causes a normal frog to jump does not cause the operated frog to jump.</p> <p>—— the spinal cord is necessary that a frog may jump.</p> <p>—— a frog's ability to jump depends upon a nervous connection between brain and body.</p> <p>—— motor responses to visual stimuli depend upon a nervous connection between brain and motor organ.</p> <p>—— jumping is a reflex action.</p> |
|--|--|

Multiple choice items are akin to true-false items in that they call for recognition. They may be made much more difficult since finer shades of difference may be introduced in several choices than in one alternative only. They are adapted to testing reasoning and judgment to a far greater extent than true-false items. They occur in many forms and are adapted to many uses.

One variation of the ordinary multiple choice item is the "analogy" problem in which two words or phrases are related to each other in some way, followed by a third and a choice of fourths sup-

¹ See pp. 165-166, 352-357. For further discussion of scoring short answer items, see pp. 370-373.

² Adapted from the Manual of Examination Methods of the University of Chicago, p. 37.

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posed to have an analogous relation. The problem is to select from the several possible fourth choices the one word or phrase which bears the same relation to the third word or phrase as does the second to the first. The three other possible choices for the fourth word or phrase are "confusion" words or distracters. The following is an example of an analogy type of multiple choice item:¹

Unemployment Compensation Law is to agricultural workers as monopoly laws are to:

- (a) Export associations
- (b) Sugar refineries
- (c) Manufacturers
- (d) Oil companies

Item 19 on page 368 is another example in social work material of this type of item.

In the foregoing pages only five general types of short answer items have been discussed. There are many other types which are largely variations on, or combinations of, these five. The principle common to all of them is the brevity and precision of the responses called for.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF ESSAY AND SHORT ANSWER TESTS

In general, essay questions are easy to set up and hard to score; short answer items are hard to set up and easy to score. It is obvious that the test purpose of an essay item is more comprehensive than that of a short answer item. The essay item may test total reaction of a candidate to a given situation, and is preferred by some for this reason, particularly in high-grade positions where judgment and qualities of leadership are essential. By some it is also preferred in professional fields where much of the subject matter

¹ Adapted from preliminary draft of Chapter 13 on Construction of Assembled Examinations which is to be part of Merit System Administration, a manual prepared for the use of state agencies by the State Technical Advisory Service of the Social Security Board, 1938.

is in controversial areas because it gives the candidate opportunity to take a position and substantiate it. In this respect it gives examiners evidence from which they may deduce not only what the candidate thinks or knows, but how thoroughly he thinks or knows it.

The candidate's response to a single essay question may yield evidence not only on his knowledge of subject matter, his judgment, creative ability, sense of values, convictions or prejudices, ability to organize his thinking and material, and facility and clarity of expression; but also on his handwriting, neatness, punctuation, spelling, and use of English. While it may be useful from some points of view and for some positions to test all of these qualities, it must be remembered that they may not all be germane to a given position. Yet evidence yielded by answer to the essay question on all of these points will almost inevitably color the score which is presumably based on a limited number of criteria. It takes an objective reader indeed to forget poor handwriting, poor spelling, and errors in grammar, when scoring a paper in which these are not supposed to have weight.

Another liability of essay questions is that they leave the candidate room for selection in regard to subject matter of his response which may mean that they give him opportunity to "bluff."

The following quotation with reference to opportunities for "bluffing" in essay examinations is taken from a treatise on examinations in the educational field, but it applies as well to examinations devised for the purpose of selection.

. . . When a pupil is confronted with a broad discussion question, he in one sense chooses the line of attack. He may be entirely ignorant of the import of the question, but for the time being he is the general in charge. He can naively "misunderstand" the question and write on some alien topic where his meager store of knowledge can be turned to better advantage. He can at times go around, under, or over the topic in a very skillful manner. He has nothing to lose, and he might win in the hands of a philanthropic teacher. An objective test, on the contrary, forces him to "face the music." In this case the teacher chooses

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the battleground. The examination forces the pupil to react to those things which the teacher deems important. . . .

On the whole, exchanging the disturbing factor of bluffing for the admitted danger of guessing (in many new-type tests) is a gain, since there is no mathematical formula for minimizing bluffing but there is a more or less adequate statistical means of allowing for guessing.¹

Certain of the handicaps indicated can be reduced somewhat, though not eliminated, by careful planning for an essay examination. Care can be taken to word the question in such a way that answers are comparable. The outward limits of the response can to some extent be built into the question. If this is not done, the answers will cover such a wide range of subject matter that no standard key or measure of scoring can be devised. The reader's evaluation will then have to be made on a different basis for each paper. Arranging candidates in order of rank on such a basis is obviously indefensible. The essay questions given on pages 137-138 illustrate how it is possible to pose an essay problem in a way that limits probable responses to those that will have a common denominator, thus facilitating reliable scoring.

The second way of minimizing these problems is through the scoring plan.² The influence of the personal bias of the reader is strong in scoring free answer examinations even when the question is so defined that answers cover the same ground. For this reason great injustice can be done and the entire test value of essay questions lost unless the scoring plan is scrupulously prepared, and, in addition to that, applied in each case by well qualified and objectively minded specialists in the subject matter involved. All the care in the world cannot reduce the scoring of free answer items to a completely objective basis. Chiefly for this reason the burden of technical opinion in the test field is against their use. In addition, examinations composed largely of essay items raise other prac-

¹ Ruch, G. M., *The Objective or New-Type Examination*. Scott, Foresman and Company, Chicago, 1929, pp. 109-110.

² For discussion of scoring of essay questions, see pp. 167-169; with reference to social work subjects, pp. 334-339, 373-384.

tical problems: because of the precautions necessary to reduce subjectivity and increase standardization, giving an essay examination is time-consuming; it is expensive because a high level of ability is needed on the part of each person who does scoring; it is irritating to candidates because so long a time must elapse between filing applications and publishing grades.

Essay examinations, however, are preferred by some for higher grades of positions when for one reason or another unassembled examinations are not desirable.

Neither written examinations of the essay type nor unassembled examinations are practical where large numbers of candidates are involved.

Short answer examinations are generally used, even by those who do not agree with the technician's rejection of the essay type, when numbers are large, when deadlines on time are imposed, or when examination is given only for lower grades of positions. They have the important advantage of allowing for many questions and therefore of permitting a more comprehensive sampling of the candidate's factual knowledge in a comparatively short time. The essay examination attempts to test all the applicant knows about a single subject; the short answer examination attempts to test a little of his knowledge about a great many subjects.

Because the short answer test can cover so much ground it is admirably suited for use as a medium for testing intelligence. While intelligence and education are by no means synonymous, it is apparent that by sprinkling through short answer written examinations a large amount of prevalidated¹ material of the intelligence test type aimed at certain educational levels, it is possible almost automatically to eliminate those with education below that of the desired level. The short answer test thus becomes a useful device

¹ By "prevalidated" material is meant test items which have been previously used on large groups of people and resulting scores so correlated with records of education and experience of those passing and failing that it is known in advance what level of education, experience, or intelligence predicts or is predicted by a correct or an incorrect answer.

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in cases where the law allows no qualifications of education to be set as entrance requirements for examinations.

A written examination may not only eliminate those below a given educational level but may also select the better educated from the poorer among those who make a minimum passing grade. This is demonstrated by some figures prepared for use in this study by a civil service agency in whose jurisdiction the law prohibits educational requirements for admission to examinations. These data show also how such a written test can discriminate between those prepared by directly related experience for the job and those whose experience is non-existent or only remotely related. In other words, the analysis gives evidence in retrospect as to what kinds of experience and education were most helpful in passing the written examination and in achieving better scores.

The tabulated material supplied by this agency is omitted here for reasons of space. It offers data from which the following conclusions are drawn, and is based on an analysis of two random sample groups of 733 persons each. All of the members of each group passed the written examination for investigators: Group A, being persons who passed with a score of 50-60; and Group B, being persons who passed with a score of 90-100. In other words, comparison is between an equal number of those who passed the written examination with the lowest and highest scores. The score on the short answer written examination was the only test factor involved in the differentiation into Group A and Group B.¹

Each group was subdivided, both according to the number of years of education beyond high school, and according to closeness of relationship of previous experience to the job of investigator in a public department.²

¹ The method of selecting Groups A and B is not recorded. It is possible that some persons were eliminated because their educational and experience records were incompletely or inadequately stated.

² In compiling the original table from which these figures were taken, the experience classification used was that on which the experience of candidates who passed the written examination was later rated in another part of the total examination procedure. In devising the formula for grading background some experience was first ruled out as having no value to the job of investigator. Other experience was classified from A to F in proportion to its diminishing degree of relation to the job. "A" experience included all social work experience in public and private case work, and public health nursing. "B" experience included teaching, hospital nursing, all other types of interviewing, and group work. "C" experience included wholesale selling, private duty nursing by a registered nurse, insurance, engineering, and so on. In using the classification

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The first point of interest is that only 2.5 per cent of the low and high passing groups combined had had neither education beyond high school nor ratable experience. In other words, the written examination which had been planned to select a group with a minimum educational level of high school or better, and with some experience, had achieved its purpose to a remarkable degree, inasmuch as this evidence seems to indicate that only a negligible number of those who lacked both qualifications were able to achieve a passing score of even 50.

The next conclusion which seems warranted is that, in addition to eliminating nearly all candidates who lacked both high school education and ratable experience, the written examination was also successful in placing at the top of the list chiefly those with the best educational preparation. Table 2 illustrates this point.

TABLE 2.—CANDIDATES PASSING A WRITTEN EXAMINATION FOR INVESTIGATOR WITH LOW AND HIGH SCORES, CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO EDUCATION^a

Group	Percentage in each group having	
	no education beyond high school	four years of college or more
Low passing group (Group A)	44	30
High passing group (Group B)	5	77

^a Data for intermediate categories are not included in Tables 2, 3, and 4. In Table 2, for example, the percentages for candidates having some but less than four years of college work are not shown.

Table 3 indicates the selective power of the written examination in discriminating between those with no related experience, and those with directly related experience.

for the purpose of grading general background, the applicant's total experience was considered and separated into the different categories. Experience in each category was assigned numerical value on a descending scale from A to F. *For the purposes of this table*, candidates were classified according to one category of experience only, the highest that each had had. Again for the purposes of this table, no experience of less than one year was considered, although shorter experience was considered in rating experience for scoring purposes.

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TABLE 3.—CANDIDATES PASSING A WRITTEN EXAMINATION FOR INVESTIGATOR WITH LOW AND HIGH SCORES, CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO EXPERIENCE^a

Group	Percentage in each group having	
	no related ex- perience	directly related experience
Low passing group (Group A)	52	24
High passing group (Group B)	23	63

^a See footnote to Table 2.

It may be assumed that, considered from the point of view of background alone, the least desirable group of all those passing would be those with no education beyond high school and no related experience; while the most desirable would be those with four years of college or better and also experience closely related to the job.

Table 4 shows the proportion of least desirable and most desirable candidates, as thus defined, in the low and high passing groups.

TABLE 4.—CANDIDATES PASSING A WRITTEN EXAMINATION FOR INVESTIGATOR WITH LOW AND HIGH SCORES, CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO BOTH EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE^a

Group	Percentage in each group having	
	no education beyond high school and no related experience	four years of college or more and directly re- lated experience
Low passing group (Group A)	31	10
High passing group (Group B)	2	51

^a See footnote to Table 2.

This somewhat lengthy analysis has been included in this study because it shows clearly what a short answer examination was able to accomplish in sorting an undifferentiated group according to educational and experience levels. Its inclusion must not be understood to imply that it would ever be desirable to depend upon an examination to do

what should be done by entrance requirements. Rather it is intended to show that all is not necessarily lost if entrance requirements are so restricted that they cannot weed out the obviously unfit. Here is direct evidence that the same end may be achieved if necessary by a clumsier and more costly method.

Short answer tests are criticized on the score that they are mechanical, that the element of guessing affects the score, that practice makes perfect in taking them, that they can test only information and intelligence and not more complex attributes such as social attitude or originality of thought.

Representatives of the professions feel there are additional possible limitations to the exclusive use of short answer questions. Problems of judgment, human relationships, and ethics are important in professions. Their point of view is that determinants for action or decision in relation to these factors are so varied that to indicate that any answer is either all right or all wrong without supporting data may be dangerous except in dealing with very elementary material.¹

Each of these two general types of written examinations has its firmly devoted supporters. One school of thought not only sees no advantages in the essay type of examination, but assigns no practical limits to the possibilities of the short answer type. The other school believes that the short answer examination is useful only for testing factual knowledge, and that therefore it has value only to a limited degree and in relation to lower grades of positions. A group which stands midway are those who either combine the two types of questions in one examination to test different qualities, or who use the short answer examination as an eliminant and supplement it with essay questions—carefully prepared and scored—for those who pass the original test, or for those who are applying for higher grades of positions. In balancing opinion on the short answer versus the essay examination, as also in weigh-

¹ The special difficulties in adapting short answer questions to social work examinations are discussed on pp. 339-362.

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ing the assets and liabilities of assembled and unassembled examinations, it must be noted that the weight of opinion of test technicians is probably on the side of the more objective tests—the assembled examination and the short answer written test.

A few civil service agencies attempt to capitalize the value of essay questions and avoid their liabilities by including one or two essay questions as a supplement to a short answer examination, omitting to grade them, but using responses to them as a basis for discussion in oral examinations.

It is apparent to persons who have worked with either type of written examination that a vast amount of further experimentation needs to be done with both types of test, particularly as applied to professional, administrative, or executive positions.

CHAPTER X

ORAL EXAMINATIONS

THE interview as used in examinations is a meeting between the candidate and a small group of examiners who question him, observe his reactions, and attempt to form a judgment upon his fitness as a whole or on specific points.¹

Interviews are usually included only in examinations for higher grades of positions or for those in which certain qualities of personality are deemed particularly important. Oral examinations are seldom given in selecting manual laborers, clerks, or lower grades of personnel in certain technical fields. They are particularly useful in testing for all positions in such professions as teaching, social work,² nursing, and library work, and in all upper supervisory and administrative public positions.

ASSETS AND LIABILITIES OF ORAL EXAMINATIONS

Increase in recent years in use of the oral examination as a test procedure is due partly to increasing awareness of the limitations of written examinations. It is known that written examinations can give no picture of such personal qualities as appearance, voice, carriage, poise, tact, and similar characteristics. Doubt has been felt as to the possibility of producing reliable evidence by either type of written examination on executive ability, judgment, and other intangible qualities of leadership. It is known that bluffing and guessing may color to some degree scores made in written examinations. The interview affords opportunity to check these and

¹ Oral examinations should be distinguished from and do not take the place of personnel interviews which appointing officers may have with each certified candidate. For all practical purposes, however, the oral examination becomes the employment interview in jurisdictions where the appointing officer must appoint the highest ranking individual certified.

² See pp. 385-394.

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other inadequacies of written examinations. In turn it has its own marked assets and limitations as a tool in selection.

First as to its assets: interviews, even more than essay questions, tend to give opportunity for evaluating the individual as a whole instead of in "compartments." The examining board sees the candidate; hears him; watches his reaction to people as well as to ideas; observes his behavior in favorable and unfavorable situations; sees how he attacks familiar and unfamiliar problems; gets not only his opinion on pertinent topics, but evidence on which it may judge whether his opinions are snap judgments and parrot-like recapitulations or are based on real thinking. The oral examination gives some opportunity to identify both the bluffer and the crammer. It may be used to throw additional light on general background and is occasionally used only to afford opportunity for collecting further evidence for scoring total background and not as a weighted part of the examination itself.

Most test experts seem to agree that the interview as part of an examination has proved relatively reliable for identifying obviously superior and obviously unfit persons. For this reason even its severest critics usually favor its use as a qualifying tool.¹ Others who doubt its complete reliability favor its use in combination with short answer written tests for certain types of positions.

As to liabilities: it has been said that, like the essay question, the interview has the advantage of treating the candidate as a whole; similarly it has disadvantages that derive therefrom.

The interviewer's feelings about the total personality of the examinee may color his judgment on any specific point, or his reaction to one characteristic may influence his opinion of the candidate's total fitness.

An English writer in comparing written and oral tests contributes the following: "The written paper will not look into the candidate's biliary eyes and say, 'Hang-over. This man goes to night clubs.' An inter-

¹ See footnote one, p. 121.

viewer may, and, after all it may be only Aunt Sarah's homemade pork pie."¹

An interesting sidelight on the degree to which the interview may be rendered an unreliable tool of measurement because of this tendency, is cited by the examining division of the United States Employment Service. The rating scale for oral examinations which they once used provided space for a qualitative evaluation of the candidate's experience. This was used as a guide to the examiners who later rated education and experience for each candidate. Analysis of ratings of experience given by the oral examiners and those whose function it was to rate experience from the written record showed "considerable 'halo' effect in making this evaluation" in interviews. "In other words, an evaluation of an individual's personality determined also in too many instances the evaluation of his experience prior to examination." For this reason the practice of making qualitative ratings of experience in oral examinations was discontinued by this agency.²

Also, in interviews as in essay examinations, the element of subjectivity is heavy; personal prejudice on social questions may influence interview scores when the interviewer least suspects it. Moreover, not only is the judgment of interviewers likely to be highly subjective, but there is also difficulty in standardizing elements on which judging is to be done and in setting up reliable scoring schedules for interviews.

A letter (received July 13, 1938) from a director of social work in a state department of public welfare confesses to uncertainty regarding the respective merits of written or oral examinations or a combination of both. The writer sees that the written free answer test, alone, tends to send to the top the person who writes well; that the interview, used alone, gives the advantage to the articulate and assured person—to the detriment of the type, familiar to all administrators, that shows up badly in an interview but is steady and effective on the job. Another objection to the interview mentioned by this writer is the difficulty of giving interviews at various geographical centers. If local oral examining boards are used, the number of variations that can be introduced into

¹ Stuart-Bunning, G. H., *The Use of the Interview in Recruitment and Promotion*, in *Public Administration*, October, 1937, p. 434.

² Data from correspondence with member of staff of the U.S. Employment Service, January 5, 1939.

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the scoring is obvious. Nevertheless, this writer sums the question up as follows:

"It seems to me that eventually, when we know a great deal more about the way to select people by written examinations and the way in which to grade written examinations, that then a written test supplemented by an oral interview would be my first choice. In the meantime, I think from observation, the oral examination only, by a good examining board, achieves the best selection."

The civil service agency serving this state department has tended to use unassembled examinations wherever possible and to give more weight to interviews than to written examinations.

It is unquestionably difficult to achieve a common basis of scoring in an oral examination, particularly if the interview is for the purpose of judging knowledge as well as factors of personality. Variations in questions and responses, and the interaction of personalities create new test problems and conditions for each interview. The basis of scoring shifts with these changed conditions. Some types of interview are more open to this difficulty than others; the reliability of all oral tests suffers to some extent from lack of uniformity.

It must be confessed also that the intended purpose of the oral examination is occasionally subtly prostituted to the illegitimate end of "getting in" someone who would otherwise be decidedly "out."

All of the factors noted have made the public in general, and applicants and organized pressure groups in particular, suspicious of the whole process of oral testing. For this reason use of interviews in selection has been sharply limited of late in many areas to the point where they are only qualifying and based on personality,¹ or else are used for the purpose of shedding light on the nature and value of qualifications but are not given weight in the final score.²

¹ As in the case of the large examination for social investigator given in 1937 in New York City by the Municipal Civil Service Commission.

² As is customarily the case in examinations given by the New York State Civil Service Commission.

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In addition, it is charged with some reason that oral examinations are slow and expensive. They are certainly time-consuming if one board is used to grade a large number of applicants for a given position. If more than one board is used there is added the hazard of lack of uniformity in judgment as between boards.

That interviews are costly has some relation to the fact that superior persons are needed for board members. Oral examiners must be competent and strictly objective in their judgment, and able to inspire public confidence in the examinations. Obviously, the success of the oral test must depend to a high degree on the integrity of persons who conduct the interviews and their capacity to make accurate judgments. If such persons are paid a "per diem," cost runs high. If they serve as volunteers it may not only be difficult to recruit a wholly competent group; they may also not be easily subject to administrative control nor be reliable in holding to a schedule.

Perhaps the largest single experiment in the use of volunteer oral boards was made in the series of examinations given early in 1937 by the Employment Board for the Department of Public Assistance in Pennsylvania for 5,000 or more state and county positions.¹ In the interviews which were a weighted part of nearly all of these examinations, 756 persons served on 212 oral boards and on a volunteer basis to the extent that only their expenses were paid. About one-third of the group were professional social workers from Pennsylvania or nearby states; two-thirds were drawn largely from other professions and from business.

On the question of securing a competent interviewing group without undue cost, the following comment is made by the English writer previously quoted: "No doubt the perfect selection committee would select the perfect candidate. There is no such thing as a perfect selection committee. In my own experience it has come down to the 'can you spare the time old man' system without regard to any other qualification."² Time to spare and the fascina-

¹ See pp. 221-222.

² Stuart-Bunning, G. H., *The Use of the Interview in Recruitment and Promotion*, in *Public Administration*, October, 1937, p. 438.

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tion which oral examining undoubtedly holds for the interviewer are hardly safe criteria on which to recruit examiners. As to the soundness of capitalizing upon the fascination of this type of interviewing in recruiting oral examiners, the same writer makes the following pointed comment: "When we talk to interviewers, they are positively ecstatic as to the interest of the work, and of course it is interesting. So is vivisection. . . ."¹

COMPOSITION OF ORAL BOARDS

Some civil service agencies assign one or more of their own staff to each oral board. Others prefer a group which is entirely dissociated from those with administrative responsibility for the examination.

Similarly, while most examining agencies believe that administrators and technicians of an operating department to which candidates will be appointed should be as far removed as possible from examinations, and particularly from oral examinations, occasionally examining agencies believe that the administrator of a program is the best judge of fitness of personnel for that program and that he should be given opportunity to express his judgment. These last, therefore, include the administrator of the operating program, or his representative, on the board which gives oral examinations. In examinations for public assistance in Arkansas, while the civil service law was still operative, members of the public assistance staff were included in the personnel of oral examining boards.

Some agencies use an exclusively professional or technical board, when applicants for a professional or technical position are to be considered, on the theory that only people trained in the profession concerned can pass judgment on a candidate's fitness. Others use personnel workers for most interviews, regardless of the field involved, on the theory that successful interviewing is a technique of itself. This latter group feels that personnel experts skilled in in-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 439.

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interviewing can more readily acquire enough knowledge of the job to provide a basis of scoring than experts in the subject of the examination can acquire skill in producing evidence by the interview method. Still other test experts prefer a liberal admixture of lay and community points of view in oral boards on the entirely non-technical principle that a public job and civil service programs both stand in need of continual interpretation to the public and that lay participation in examinations is one good way of securing such interpretation. Marie Dresden Lane's article, 'The Education of an Examiner,' is a spirited presentation of this point of view.¹

As a means of overcoming the layman's unfamiliarity with or even hostility toward the civil service system or toward the profession in whose field the position lies it may be desirable to include some community representation in oral board membership.

Make-up of oral boards in recent examinations for public assistance in Indiana indicated recognition on the part of the civil service agency of all three values above indicated. For state positions oral boards were almost uniformly composed of leading social workers or social workers and personnel specialists. For county positions in which the incumbents' success would necessarily depend in part on local acceptance of them and their work, at least one local person, "lay" from the point of view of the social worker, was included in each board.

Perhaps the best solution for the interview for technical positions is a combination of technician to pass on expertness, a personnel specialist to ensure that the interview yields what it should, and a representative of the public to provide a balance.

NEED TO STUDY PROCEDURES AND RESULTS OF ORAL EXAMINATIONS

Much criticism of the interview as a tool in selection undoubtedly comes from attempts to make interviews carry too much of the load. Obviously, a fifteen- or twenty-minute interview can be used to evaluate only a very small number of factors and will yield only

¹ *In* Survey Midmonthly, April, 1938, vol. 74, no. 4, pp. 105-107.

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limited evidence on these. For example, while the obviously psychotic individual will probably reveal his personality difficulties in even a short interview, the individual whose emotional disturbance is less advanced may deceive even a skilled board. Only an examination of past performance and careful observation during the probationary period will identify a borderline case of this type. If a short and restricted interview is expected to take the place of such study of performance, results are bound to be disappointing.

If, on the other hand, the length of the interview is left to the discretion of the board, and the candidate's past record with substantiating evidence is put at its disposal, the possible effectiveness of oral examinations is greatly extended. The danger here is that the interview may overstep its bounds and trespass on the province of other parts of the examination. It is conceivable that an expertly conducted interview might constitute the entire examination in a civil service procedure. This procedure would be feasible, of course, only when the number of candidates to be examined was relatively small and the same board could interview all of them.

Many civil service agencies are experimenting with the interview, but the experiments have not yet met the "proof-of-the-pudding" test which will give the only reliable assurance of their validity. It is important that systematized studies be made of correlation of scores from various types of interviews, as well as scores from other test processes, with results of subsequent performance. That form of oral examination which is found to have the highest correlation with excellence in performance on the job will then become the method preferred by progressive civil service agencies. Test experts sometimes assert that this point has been settled by studies made in the past. If so, such studies seem not to be widely known or used, for there certainly is great difference of opinion as to what form of interview is best and how it can be so controlled as to be most effective. In the meantime, in planning interviews it is worth while to note and give critical attention to all attempts which have been made to standardize method and scoring.

CHAPTER XI

EVALUATION OF THE BACKGROUND OF CANDIDATES

EVALUATION of a candidate's total background means assigning a definite score value to his qualifications as he has described them in terms of education and experience listed on his application blank. In unassembled examinations the score value given to his qualifications may be his final examination grade. In qualifying examinations, on the other hand, no score value may be given to his background. This is upon the theory that performance in the job, capacity to pass a test, or a combination of these, is a fairer basis on which to estimate present fitness than any evaluation of qualifications on the basis of which the candidate was originally hired and has continued to be employed. In the usual competitive assembled examination a score representing the value of a candidate's background is customarily combined with scores obtained from written test and oral examination in arriving at the final grade.¹

Scoring of background is commonly based on a prearranged table of values. Because education and experience both are involved, the first problem in setting up such a table is to determine the relative values of education and experience in relation to a given position, and to set a maximum score obtainable for each. For most positions, a balanced equipment of education and experience is considered to be preferable to all of one and none of the other. No score is given for either education or experience that is below the minimum standard set in entrance requirements.

In allotting credits for education, some of the problems to be considered are the relative values of general and special education,

¹ For discussion of method of scoring background for public welfare positions see pp. 306-315.

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standards which educational institutions must meet to be considered acceptable, importance of degrees versus years of education, evaluation of informal and extension courses, and the definition of "equivalents" to be allowed for education and experience.¹

When planning a scoring schedule for experience, the system usually employed is to divide experience data into classes according to their pertinence to the job, and to assign them values in descending order as they are more remotely related. Among questions to be determined here are how much to discount experience remote in time as compared with recent experience—especially in fields where content is rapidly changing; the relative values of certain types of experience when based on training in comparison with experience not so based; and the point in continuing experience in a given job at which the law of diminishing returns begins to operate.

Weights given to various elements in scoring training and experience may greatly affect the final order of rank of given groups of eligibles. Decisions on these points are therefore likely to be closely scrutinized by them. Pressure groups will probably bring their artillery to bear upon questions involved in scoring background. Incumbents will be prone to ask that substantial credit be given for experience in the particular job for which an examination is being held, rather than for the same type of experience in any other organization. Similarly, they may ask that heavier weighting be given to government service in general than to similar service in business or outside professional life. Organized groups of eligibles who have not been employed in the department concerned want just the opposite.

A news item from the New York Times of June 26, 1938, entitled *Regrading Ordered for Social Workers*, gives interesting evidence of the nature of opposed interests in the scoring of background. The item reports:

¹ These problems are discussed on pp. 284-317 as they relate to public welfare positions.

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"A court order directing the Municipal Civil Service Commission to regrade the experience papers of all candidates for appointment as social investigators to eliminate favoritism to employes of the Emergency Relief Bureau was affirmed unanimously yesterday by the Appellate Division. The system used by the commission, the court said, might lead to a breakdown of civil service standards.

"The court order was granted originally on application of . . . one of those not connected with the ERB who took and passed the test given Dec. 30, 1936. . . .

"Employes of the ERB, the court found, received a basic experience rating of 80, while all others, whatever their experience, received a basic rating of 70. An additional credit of four points was given ERB employes for their first year's experience, while only one point was given others for similar experience. Another three points were given ERB employes for possessing a college degree, but no such allowance was made to others with degrees. . . .

"According to the opinion, the result of using the method has been to place the bulk of non-Emergency Relief Bureau employes on the eligible list below No. 2,700, while the prior positions on the list went to relief bureau employes."

It sounds very much as though the story behind this item was that of two pressure groups, one, the organized incumbents who apparently pressed for special privilege at the time the plan for grading background was set up, and who temporarily achieved their aim; the other, the organized eligibles, an incorporated body, who acted as watchdogs on special privilege and finally won out through a court order.

Veterans' lobbies not only demand a differential for veterans in the total score, but wish to have military service included as experience for which credit may be assigned.¹ Veterans may press for this consideration regardless of whether military service has any value as preparation for the position in question; regardless of whether all experience is considered by the examining agency in scoring background for a given position, or only directly related experience; and regardless also of whether the examining agency has ruled that experience gained before a definite date is not to be considered in relation to a given position.

¹ See pp. 61-65, 107-108, 293.

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Political sponsors or critics of an incumbent staff may press for a special alignment of credits for experience and training in connection with a given position or series of positions which may so affect total scores that it will tend to "freeze in" or "throw out" present personnel.

In other words, balance as to who shall be in and who shall be out often lies in the schedule devised for scoring training and experience, particularly when these factors are given a heavy weight in the final score in relation to other tests. Because of the dangers of manipulation in the interests of special groups, these schedules are viewed with suspicion by many.

To devise a plan for scoring education and experience that will push the best personnel to the top of the list is not so difficult after it has been determined what are "the best" qualifications. This query leads in turn back to the position itself. "What is the actual content of duties and responsibilities?" "What is the equipment of individuals who have carried out its responsibilities best on the basis of a wide sampling?" Finding answers to these questions should precede asking, "What plan for scoring equipment will favor that type of background?" Here is demonstrated again the fundamental importance to the whole selection procedure of careful attention to two problems, position-classification and service ratings.

CHAPTER XII

SCORING AND GRADING

SCORING and grading are two terms often interchangeably used in civil service parlance to describe the process, first, by which an individual's achievement in a test is translated into numbers, and second, by which he is ranked on the basis of the numerical count received in relation to other competitors. Scoring is used in this study to refer to the first of these processes, and grading to the second.

To devise sound systems for scoring and grading examination results is a highly technical problem shot through with considerations of a purely mathematical or statistical nature. Let it suffice to set forth here the characteristics and objectives of some systems used and to point out that the results of an otherwise good examination can be largely nullified if the system used is not statistically sound.

The whole trend and aim of modern civil service agencies as well as of modern educational institutions which face the same problem, is to remove subjective elements from scoring. Scoring is a process of measurement and as such must have an exact base to be dependable. Only in recent years has there been realization of the great undependability of earlier scoring methods.

Problems in scoring and grading may be understood more clearly if the process is divided into three steps:

1. Totaling up "hits and misses" for any one candidate for each part of the examination
2. Combining scores from the several parts of an examination into a single score according to a weighted formula
3. Listing individuals in order of rank on the basis of final scores

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SCORING WRITTEN TESTS¹

The first step in scoring "hits and misses" in both short answer and essay examinations is preparing a "key" or standard set of answers against which, as a measuring stick, candidates' answers are scored. The key contains all possible acceptable answers to a given question. The key for both types of examinations should be prepared at the same time that the examinations are being set up. It is usually rechecked after an essay examination has been given and may often have to be rechecked in the case of a short answer test, since the appearance of a very high proportion of wrong answers to a single item may indicate that ambiguities or other faults in the construction of the item itself may have invalidated the key. Moreover, personal prejudices may color the thinking of a person who builds a key to a short answer examination as well as that of the person who builds the more complicated key to an essay item.

An amusing instance of this kind of problem occurs in a note on the editorial page of the July 9, 1938, issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*: "The chief clinician of a training school for subnormal children writes us that he gave a psychological examination to a 16-year-old Negro boy. The boy was asked a standard question for the 14-year-old level: 'There are three main differences between a President and a King. What are they?' The average subject is baffled by the question, but after a moment's reflection, this boy answered: 'The only difference I can see is that a King doesn't have money to spend as freely as a President.' 'Do I,' asks the examiner, 'score him as having failed, or do I put three gold stars beside his name?' "

Short Answer Type. Totaling "hits and misses" in a short answer examination after the final key² is established is a matter of simple count for "hits" and a relating of "misses" to them in such a way as to reduce the effect of guesses on the score. As previ-

¹ The discussion of scoring and grading in the following pages refers to assembled and unassembled examinations alike. Each is made up of some combination of possible component parts except that unassembled examinations may include the evaluation of original theses (which are after all only expanded essay questions) or evaluation of the candidate's previously published writings.

² See pp. 370-373.

ously indicated, the element of guessing varies from one type of short answer item to another. Candidates are usually instructed not to guess; in addition to this the element of chance may be further reduced by mathematical correction.¹

Where a short answer question is of such type that candidates have only one alternate choice, errors are often not recorded. Sometimes they are recorded and related to right answers by a mathematical formula devised to eliminate the effect of guessing and to give some advantage to the one who makes no response as compared to the one who makes an incorrect response. The formula usually used for computing scores on a four-part multiple choice item is $R - \frac{W}{3}$, or "rights minus one-third wrongs," and $R - \frac{W}{2}$ for a three-part item. This formula, however, is by no means approved by all test experts.

After the key and the formula for scoring short answer items have been devised, they can be applied by clerical workers, or scoring can even be done by machine.

Time and money are often saved in scoring short answer papers by a stencil or punch-card system. Recently there has come into use a machine for scoring which eliminates making a card for each answer sheet and permits scoring from original lead-pencil marks set down by the applicant. By means of electrical contacts with the graphite on the answer sheet, the machine gives a reading on a dial of a single numerical score for the total paper, such final score being based on adjusted and even weighted scores for individual items. This final score is then entered by the operator on the answer sheet.

The machine has been used for some time for scoring results of written examinations because of the accuracy, speed, and economy of the method. Several hundred papers an hour can be scored by the machine and the small element of error may be eliminated by a single or double rescoring.²

¹ For a full discussion of this topic, see *The Objective or New-Type Examination*, by G. M. Ruch, Scott, Foresman and Company, Chicago, 1929. See especially Chapter 12, *Chance and Guessing in Recognition Tests*, pp. 318-357.

² For an experiment in Ohio, see *Machines in Civil Service Recruitment; With Special Reference to Experiences in Ohio*, by Reuben Horchow. Pamphlet no. 14. Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada, Chicago, October, 1939.

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Essay Type. Reliability of scoring "hits and misses" in an essay examination depends on the skill with which the item was originally framed, the inclusiveness of the key, and the degree to which it is related to the factors which the item is supposed to test.¹

The major reason for establishing a key for scoring essay items is, of course, to standardize those elements upon which the score is to be based and to set a pattern for what is and is not acceptable by way of content of response. An important secondary reason is to eliminate as far as possible such irrelevant considerations as handwriting, use of English, spelling, and neatness from the scoring of a question which is intended to be scored on content alone. If such matters are to be included as a basis for scoring, provision for this is made in the key, but preferably as a separate item.

The key should usually assign weights to items in order of importance, but this phase of key preparation is often neglected. Great care is needed in building, revising, and weighting keys for essay tests after papers to be scored have been read; for the maker of the original key, even though an expert, is not necessarily infallible, and the key may therefore not be comprehensive. All three of these processes involve intimate knowledge of the subject matter of the position. Devising the systems of key building and scoring lies within the area of authority of the test expert, but the professional or technical adviser in the subject matter of the position concerned often has the last word on what may be accepted as content of the standard answer.

The difficulties in key making for essay questions are well illustrated by Dr. Ben D. Wood in the following incident. One of the five or six expert readers assigned to a certain group of history papers, after scoring a few, wrote out for his own convenience what he considered a model paper for the given set of ten questions. By some mischance this model fell into the hands of another reader who graded it in a perfectly bona fide fashion. The mark he assigned to it was below passing, and, in accordance with the custom, this model was rated by a number

¹ For further discussion, see pp. 334-339, 373-384.

of other expert readers in order to insure that it was properly marked. The marks assigned to it by these readers varied from 40 to 90.¹

It is usually considered necessary to have essay examinations scored by more than one person, since experiments in the educational field have clearly demonstrated the great subjectivity of essay scoring. A number of studies of school examinations made by competent authorities give unmistakable evidence of the extreme undependability of essay scoring.

Among these are the pioneer studies of Starch and Elliott, who submitted exact copies of examination papers to a large number of teachers. The same English paper was graded by 142 teachers from 50 to 98, with the majority of scores falling between 75 and 90. In geometry 115 teachers graded the same paper from 28 to 92, with a heavy distribution of scores from 60 to 86.²

A recent study of public examinations in England gives even clearer evidence of need either for standardization in scoring or for change in the type of test used. "In one study, fifteen history examinations which were originally considered to be of equal value, when regraded by other readers, received marks varying from 21 to 70 out of a possible 96. Much more interesting and suggestive is the fact that when 14 of the original examiners regraded the same history paper after an interval of a year or more, their marks differed from those they had previously given, the difference in one case being as great as 30 points."³

These are three examples from an imposing array of similar studies, all pointing to the incontrovertible fact of the difficulty of eliminating subjective elements in scoring anything but the most objective type of response.

It is deemed necessary, therefore, not only to score by carefully devised key, but to check grades given by one rater on the basis of a predetermined key against those given by another on the same

¹ The Measurement of College Work, *in* Educational Administration and Supervision, vol. 7, no. 9, September, 1921, p. 326.

² Starch, Daniel, and Elliott, E. C., Reliability of the Grading of High School Work, *in* School Review, vol. 20, no. 7, September, 1912, pp. 442-457; vol. 21, no. 4, April, 1913, pp. 254-259; vol. 21, no. 10, December, 1913, pp. 676-681.

³ Rinsland, Henry Daniel, Constructing Tests and Grading in Elementary and High School Subjects. Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York, 1937, p. 5.

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basis. A fair degree of correlation in resulting scores is thus achieved.

SCORING ORAL TESTS

The fact that oral examinations attempt to measure the more complex attributes of personality renders scoring these tests a difficult problem.¹ "Hits and misses" in an interview are not definite. A chart or scale is commonly used, containing a definite number of attributes on which it is expected that evidence can be produced in the interview. These are broken down into as concrete factors as possible.² It is generally agreed that the scale should not include such undemonstrable characteristics as honesty or unselfishness. There is no question that an interview can give evidence on such qualities as appearance, voice, alertness, and facility of expression. Some believe that it can yield comparable evidence on tact, judgment, and poise. Whether it can be expected to demonstrate executive or supervisory ability is questionable except as these attributes may be broken down into knowledge of subject matter and skill in presenting it. Knowledge about how to do something does not always assure or predict skill in being able to do it.

The first problem, then, in planning oral tests is to isolate attributes which the interview will attempt to measure. In this brief sentence lies the text for a book or a comprehensive research project! Next, the standard or norm against which measurement is to be made must be determined. Are interviewers rating against an ideal, an average in the general population, or an average of what might be presumed to be acceptable in the position?

¹ For discussion of problems in scoring interviews in relation to public welfare positions, see pp. 390-394.

² For an example of an oral rating sheet designed to measure personal characteristics and so planned that it may be machine scored, see *Oral Examinations in Civil Service Recruitment: With Special Reference to Experiences in Pennsylvania*, by W. V. Bingham. Pamphlet no. 13. Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada, Chicago, February, 1939, pp. 15-17. See also Horchow, Reuben, *Machines in Civil Service Recruitment; With Special Reference to Experiences in Ohio*. Pamphlet no. 14. Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada, Chicago, October, 1939.

If the interview is primarily to rate knowledge, or knowledge in addition to personality, the score is sometimes based on content and form of responses to a predetermined set of uniform questions. The scoring problem then is similar to that of scoring essay questions: a key to acceptable answers may be devised in advance.¹ Posing uniform questions to a candidate in an oral examination has the virtue of yielding replies which are to some extent comparable. It has the disadvantage that subject matter is likely to become known to candidates in advance of their tests, because oral examinations by a single board may continue over a period of days or even weeks.²

Having secured evidence in the interview on which to score, in what form is scoring to be done? Is degree of excellence to be recorded in percentages, on a scale of numbers or letters, in terms of points on a line, or in descriptive phrases? All of these systems are used with varying degrees of success—the success depending not so much on the type of system employed as upon the care with which it was worked out and understood by members of oral examining boards. If judgments of interviewers are to be combined with scores from other parts of the examination, they will eventually have to be translated into numbers regardless of the form in which they were originally recorded.

Some examining agencies prefer that the several members of an oral board agree on a single score for each individual; others prefer that each member register his independent vote. In either event, it is usual for the board to hold group discussions between the time of recording the tentative and the final scores for each candidate. An argument for agreement on a single score is that a score representing reconciliation of opinion gives a fairer estimate

¹ For a description of a large series of oral tests conducted according to this plan, see the Forty-Fifth Annual Report of the United States Civil Service Commission, for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1928, section on Oral Examinations, pp. 36–49. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1928.

² The United States Civil Service Commission employs the practice of sending candidates a copy of the questions with the admission letters in recognition of this danger and in the attempt to make conditions equal for all.

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of the candidate's worth than a score based on an average of what may be widely divergent opinions. An argument for independent scores is that they prevent possible control by a single dominant personality.

COMBINING SCORES FROM PARTS OF AN EXAMINATION

Having achieved a total of "hits and misses" for the separate parts of the examination, the next task is to relate these partial scores and to decide how they are to be combined to make a single score for each individual.

The usual method is, first, to assign a certain weight to each part of the test process; to convert the numerical return for each part into its weighted score value; and then to add these converted scores to make the total score. It is usually required that each candidate make a minimum passing level on the combined score in order to achieve a place on the eligible list. Sometimes it is required that he make a minimum "passing" mark for one or more parts of the examination as well, but in this case the minimum may be lower than for the total score.

Whether "passing" is to depend upon the candidate's making a minimum level for the examination as a whole; whether he must also attain a minimum for one or more of the parts—and if the latter, for what parts—are matters determined by complex considerations. These include such factors as statutory provisions;¹ knowledge by the civil service agency that some part of the examination is less valid than the rest; public sentiment against any particular type of test process. If a candidate's rank is based only on a composite score, whether or not this is figured according to a weighted formula, a high score on one part of the test may compensate for a low score on another. Whether this is desirable de-

¹ For example, the law in Connecticut specifies that "earned ratings of each person competing in any test shall be determined by the weighed [*sic*] average of the earned ratings on all phases of the test, according to weights for each phase established by the director in advance of the giving of the tests and published as a part of the announcement of the examination." (Chapter 171 of Public Acts of 1937, An Act Establishing a Merit System for State Employees, sec. 23, p. 9.)

pende in large part on relative validity of the several parts of the total test.

The decision on what weights are to be assigned to part scores in order to arrive at a composite score depends first not on statistical calculations but on the content of the job. Only on knowledge of requirements of the job, checked against quality of past performance in it of persons with various types of equipment, can a workable formula be devised for relating the importance of factual knowledge, personality, and training as elements in selection. However, it may be generally stated that as jobs go up the scale of responsibility, complexity, and salary, training and experience as selective determinants tend to be weighted more heavily than written and oral tests. Conversely, when the job concerned is at the bottom of the vocational ladder, the score which represents value of the candidate's background tends to have less weight than the scores of other parts of the examination.

Influence of Entrance Requirements. The kind of entrance requirements set has considerable influence upon the relative importance assigned in the composite score to scores representing parts of the total test. If all but a highly select group are eliminated from competition for a given job at the time of application, then perhaps it is more important to give weight in the final score to personal qualifications as shown in the oral interview, or to knowledge, judgment, and reasoning powers as indicated by the written test, than to place great emphasis upon the relative values of M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s. To give much weight to evaluation of education and experience in such a case is in effect to weight education and experience twice in the total score as compared with performance in tests.

On the other hand, if entrance qualifications are low or practically non-existent, then the numerical weighting given in the final score to evaluation of experience and education may make this element a highly important factor in selection.

In Ohio and Connecticut the law does not permit the statewide

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personnel agencies to require formal education in entrance qualifications. By the practical device of weighting total background heavily in the final score, and so emphasizing education as a part of total experience, the consideration of education may be included in the total score.¹

Another device which for reasons of economy it is sometimes desirable to use in order to offset low entrance qualifications is to set the minimum passing score in written tests at a comparatively high level. By this means the written examination automatically sifts out and eliminates poorly qualified candidates, while it retains for further testing a smaller number of superior candidates. To offset the hazard of making such a written examination with a high passing score play too large a part in ranking as contrasted to passing, the weight assigned to scores from the written examination may be kept relatively low in respect to the weight of scores from other parts of the examination. The result of such planning is that, while the written examination eliminates a great many candidates from further consideration, it does not play more than its normal role in determining the order of rank of those remaining.

Before the passing level on the written examination can be set high with this end in view, however, the validity of the written test and the importance in the job of the factors tested by it must be given due consideration. If a written examination is hastily thrown together without proper validation or if there is danger that it is not sufficiently related to the total requirements of the job, it is likely to be "soft-pedaled" by careful examiners as an element in ranking candidates. Similarly, if oral tests, for reasons of time and volume, cannot be standardized or are under attack they may be assigned a low proportional weight in the final score. When, for example, oral examinations have to be conducted by many boards in many centers at one time, there would seem to be some question as to the justification of throwing as much weight on the

¹ See pp. 160-163, 306-315 for discussion of grading total background; also p. 146 on the use of short answer items.

score derived from interviews as would be the case if interview scores were made a disqualifying element.

Special Technical Problems. There are statistical pitfalls in the process of combining scores from parts of an examination as well as in arriving at part scores. For example, if the total range of candidates' scores on the several parts of the examination differs, this will affect the weight of each part score when the several part scores are averaged, giving heavier weight to the score with the greatest range.

Dr. Walter V. Bingham¹ has made exposition of this point as follows (in relation to a particular series of examinations):

When combining marks [part scores], care was exercised to avoid the common error of averaging them without taking into account the range over which the marks in each of the three sets of data are spread. Too often the arithmetical fact has been overlooked that when two or more sets of numerical data do not have the same range, averaging them does not give them equal weight, but gives heavier weight to the data with the wider range. An illustration will make this principle obvious [Table 1.—Illustrating Effect of Range of Ratings on Rank Order of Candidates].

CASE I. Range of Oral Ratings, Ten Points

	Written test mark	Experience rating	Oral exam. rating	Average	Rank
Candidate A	65	75	80	72.5	3
Candidate B	75	75	75	75.0	2
Candidate C	85	75	70	77.5	1

CASE II. Range of Oral Ratings, Thirty Points

Candidate A	65	75	90	77.5	1
Candidate B	75	75	75	75.0	2
Candidate C	85	75	60	72.5	3

¹ Bingham, W. V., *Oral Examinations in Civil Service Recruitment: With Special Reference to Experiences in Pennsylvania*. Pamphlet no. 13. Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada, Chicago, February, 1939, pp. 22-23. Data quoted verbatim with rearrangement of paragraphs.

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Suppose [this table represents the scores of] three candidates [who] are competing for a certain opening and that it has been decided to give equal weight to the written test, the experience rating and the oral examination [though experience is not averaged with written and oral ratings in obtaining the above averages]. Candidate A is a mature administrator with only a minimum of education who took no time to cram for the written test but passed it with a mark of 65. Candidate B made 75; and C, a bright young Ph.D., made 85. In the ratings on training and experience the three candidates were tied with the score of 75. The oral examination rating [in Case I] of Candidate A was 80; B, 75; and C, 70. When these figures are averaged . . . Candidate A is at the bottom of the list with a combined rating of 72.5, Candidate B in the middle with 75, and Candidate C at the top with a mark of 77.5. The fact that the oral examination ratings are distributed over only one-half as wide a range as the written examination marks has ipso facto given the written examination twice the weight of the oral.

In Case II [it is supposed that the same candidates made scores similar to those in Case I in the first two parts of the examination, but that] the oral ratings are spread over a larger range, from 60 to 90, which gives them three times the weight they have in Case I and places Candidate A at the head of the list. The experience ratings used in this illustration, having a range of zero, cannot affect the rank order, no matter by what weight factor they may be multiplied.

In order that these examinations may have equal weight, the raw data must, before averaging, be altered by applying the necessary multipliers, or else the same outcome must be secured by first adjusting the ranges over which the three sets of data are spread so that these ranges will be of the same magnitude. Fewer clerical computations are needed when this second method is adopted.

According to much the same principle, the length of each part of an examination will affect the weight of the score from that part on the total score. If one section of a test contains 100 items and another 25 it is obvious that unless some mathematical correction is applied the score from the first will have four times the weight of the score from the second. It may be thought necessary in order to increase its reliability to make one part of a test much longer than another. The resulting lengths of the several parts may not reflect the relative importance to the job of the factors which they

test. The necessary correction for this situation can be applied by assigning weights which give the parts equal value or by applying other mathematical formulae which are too complicated for elaboration here.

In other words, there may be at least two reasons for weighting part scores before they are combined: first, to relate them to the total score in a ratio that reflects from all points of view the importance of individual tests to the total examination; and second, to take care of differences in range of scores resulting from parts of an examination or differences in the length of the part-tests themselves. Success in any system of weighting component scores to derive a composite score depends, then, upon skill in achieving a nice balance among a multiplicity of variables and upon the correct application of statistical method.

DETERMINING RANK ON AN ELIGIBLE LIST

After scores on the several parts of an examination have been determined and translated into a final score for each individual, there remains the task of distributing individual scores on a scale so as to represent their order of rank or presumed excellence. One way of doing this, and perhaps the commonest one, is to use the actual total score derived from the part scores as indicator of the individual's place on an eligible list. If the passing mark for a given examination is 70 on a scale of 100, then all individuals who have made a "raw score" of 70 or above are eligible for appointment either in order of their scores or as a group. The difficulty with this system is that if examinations are very hard, lists may be inadequate to meet the needs of appointing officers; while if examinations are easy, eligible lists or registers may be far too long. In the latter event only a small number of persons can be appointed in relation to the total list, which fact may bring public disfavor upon the system, or upon the agency employing it. An attempt to meet such a situation by raising or lowering the passing grade that had been previously announced would be inexpedient and likely to

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lay the examining agency open to charges of intended manipulation.

Another system of grading, known as the percentile system, obviates this difficulty but has other hazards. In a percentile system of scoring, the scores made by each candidate are translated into another figure which represents his order of rank in relation to the performance of the total group—rather than in relation to a possible perfect performance. In this system the best score made, regardless of what it may be, is considered 100 and all other scores are ranged in relation to that on the scale of 100. If the passing grade for a given examination is set at the 70th percentile, it means that the best 30 per cent will automatically pass, regardless of the numerical value of the scores of the lowest in the upper 30 per cent. This system has the very great advantage of allowing almost complete predictability as to the number of candidates who will qualify. By means of it the length of the eligible list for each job can be automatically adjusted to need for personnel as soon as the number of accepted applications is known. It has the disadvantage of sometimes allowing persons of inferior ability to be declared eligible since it tends to rank candidates against excellence of the group instead of against an established standard.

This danger can be partly overcome by establishing a minimum score level in applying a percentile criterion. When this is done, candidates with scores below this level are not considered as having passed even though their scores have brought them within the accepted percentile.

The question of whether or not to use a percentile system of scoring may be bound up, therefore, not only with expediency and costs, but with severity of entrance qualifications and the success of the recruiting program in bringing out a sufficient number of really qualified people to compete. The percentile system may perhaps be more safely used when there is ample evidence that the general level of qualifications of the group examined is exceptionally high.

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Readers who have reached this point will agree that the whole subject of scoring and grading is technical and complicated. Its high spots are touched here partly in order that social workers who are co-operating with civil service agencies may realize how involved is the subject and how tentative must be their opinions about it; and partly in order that they may have more understanding of the problems of the test expert and of the terminology which he employs.

CHAPTER XIII

CERTIFICATION; PROVISIONAL AND PROBATIONARY EMPLOYMENT

RELATION OF CERTIFICATION TO ELIGIBILITY AND APPOINTMENT

NOTIFYING an appointing officer what individuals he may appoint from the register of eligibles for a given position is called "certifying."¹ Candidates are usually notified at the same time that their names have been certified and are sometimes issued a "certificate of eligibility." Other eligibles, who are not yet to be certified, are usually notified of their position on the eligible list. Sometimes, as is the case in the federal system, candidates are notified of their eligibility and relative standing, but are not notified when their names are certified to an appointing officer.

An interesting variation on the usual methods of certification was reported for Wisconsin at the 1938 annual conference of the Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada, by Mr. K. G. Beggs, Chief Examiner for the Wisconsin Bureau of Personnel. Only a few candidates at the top of the list for each position are certified as eligible, the number to be so certified at the time having previously been stated in the examination announcement. The remaining competitors are notified only that their names are not on the eligible list. No candidate who is not eligible for appointment knows whether his grade was high or low under this system. The newspaper report terms this "a Wisconsin contribution toward the more gracious life."²

Appointment is made by the operating agency or department from those certified, and is not the responsibility of the examining

¹ The term "certification" as defined here should be clearly distinguished from the term as used in a totally different sense when it refers to a form of legalized governmental or official approval of qualifications. See pp. 258-261.

² Wisconsin Has No "Failures" in Civil Service, *in* the Washington Post, Washington, D. C., October 17, 1938.

agency.¹ The latter, however, is often given opportunity at regular intervals to check payrolls against the certified list in order to make sure that appointments have been properly made from it.

Practice varies greatly on the amount of freedom given appointing officers in selection from a list of eligibles. In certain jurisdictions law or custom rules that the ranking candidate must be appointed. More commonly, any of the first three on a register may be appointed. This is known informally as the "one-in-three" plan. In some situations appointing officers are either given free choice in appointing from the entire list of eligibles, or free choice with the single exception that special groups, such as veterans or incumbents,² are to be preferred to other eligibles. An argument for eliminating appointive discretion is that civil service systems are designed to prevent discrimination and favoritism which are rendered impossible when no appointive discretion is allowed. Advocates of this plan believe that once superiority is demonstrated by securing first place on the list, it should be rewarded by appointment. Critics of this system, who usually favor the "one-in-three" plan, feel that an administrator should be given some choice on personnel: they believe further that the "no-choice" plan puts too much credence in the validity of examinations; that fractional differences in scores are of less value in predicting success than is the appointing officer's judgment of the fitness of an individual for a given situation; and that the "one-in-three" plan eliminates effectually any serious danger of discrimination. Those who favor giving appointing officers free choice of all eligibles usually have in mind the administrative problem of staff turnover which may result when incumbents are being examined; or they doubt the wisdom of throwing more than minimum weight on examinations; or they have the interests of special groups or individuals at heart.

¹ For the Standards published by the Social Security Board concerning procedures discussed in this chapter, see pp. 48-49 and Appendix.

² Preference for incumbents, unlike that for veterans, being usually permissive rather than mandatory.

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The newspapers of New York City recently reported an interesting exception to the habitual method of appointing from civil lists in New York City.¹ By the mayor's order, since the time of Mayor Gaynor (1910-1913), the rule has been to appoint the ranking candidate from the appropriate list to those municipal positions that fall under the civil service. While the municipal commission is under the general jurisdiction of the State Commission, this independent ruling by the city had been accepted by the state because it was more stringent than that required by the state ruling. There have been exceptions to the city ruling in the past, but these have apparently related to passing over a single individual, and not to waiving the system of appointment for a whole eligible list, as in the present instance. On occasions when the mayor's order is waived, the state ruling of "one-in-three" becomes operative.

The eligible list from a recent examination for administrators in the Department of Public Welfare, in which incumbents participated, revealed that if candidates were appointed in exact order of rank, the administrative turnover would be considerably larger than if the appointing officer were given a choice of one out of three candidates. This was especially important because many administrators had not made a passing score and were to be dropped—a fact which would in itself create serious disruption in a large department. To avoid further interruption of the flow of the department's services, therefore, and also to avoid the necessity of appointing the less acceptable candidates among the high ranking eligibles, the Commissioner of Public Welfare secured from the Mayor waiver of the customary rule for appointments, which resulted in permission to appoint one out of three.

In such a situation as this there are conflicting considerations to be weighed: on the one hand, there is the very real problem of preserving administrative continuity during a temporary emergency; there are the delays and inefficiencies involved in appointing, and later dismissing after the probationary period, such unqualified persons as may have attained high rank on an eligible list; and there is always the general argument that administrators should have some leeway in selection from a list of qualified people, particularly in relation to important positions.

While it is true that the one-in-three rule is rather generally preferred

¹ Civil Service Rule Is Waived by Hodson, *in* the New York Times, January 3, 1939. The news item stated erroneously that the waiver to which reference is made permitted the Commissioner of Public Welfare to select candidates from the eligible list as a whole.

to the more rigid system ordinarily in force in New York City, there are several disadvantages in attempting to correct difficult administrative situations by making blanket exceptions to a traditionally established rule. There is first the danger of starting a precedent for such exceptions. While an exception for a good reason in the hands of a good administrator may be defensible, it opens the way for exceptions, based on good or poor reasons, in the hands of a poor administrator—which is something quite different. A second danger is that of discrediting the civil service process in the minds of the general public and of employes who are affected. Both dangers are especially acute when the exception applies, as in the case cited, to an entire department and involves a large group of persons in strategic positions. How far will the process of selection by merit be actually weakened by following this practice? Most important of all, will a department which asks for such a waiver be able to base its selection among incumbents on a sound, objective, and cumulative system of service ratings, or will it have to depend on subjective and hastily gathered evidence? On what basis will the capacity of unknown candidates be precisely rated in relation to that of incumbents? If the department is not prepared to make an objective rating of both these groups, among whom the one-in-three rule will introduce many factors of variation over the precise ratings established by the test itself, there would seem to be grave danger in setting aside a rule which has hitherto, in a particular jurisdiction, been considered a necessary protection to appointment by merit.

There were other possible courses of action in meeting the emergency situation in New York City. One might have been to use the eligible list in question as an argument for the advisability of returning to the rule of one-in-three for all civil service appointments in the city's jurisdiction. Another might have been to request permission to pass over the name of any single candidate whose past record gave evidence of inefficiency. Mayor and Commissioner in New York City decided in favor of waiving the traditional system for the whole list—no doubt after giving full consideration to both sides of the controversy. Those concerned alike with departmental standards and civil service standards in New York City will watch the results with interest.

If the ranking candidate must be appointed, usually only one name is certified for each position to be filled. In the case of multiple appointments to a single type of position where the appointing officer has some choice, the number of names certified from the

CERTIFICATION AND EMPLOYMENT

eligible list will depend both upon the amount of original choice allowed and upon regulations covering the number of times a single name must be considered before being permanently dropped from the eligible list. In the few jurisdictions where the appointing officer has free choice from a list of eligibles, the whole list of those who passed the examination is certified to him at once.

Practice varies both as to the number of times an appointing officer may pass over a given name, and a candidate may refuse appointment and still remain on the eligible list. Three opportunities for consideration both by appointing officers and by candidates is the rule in a number of agencies.

Ascertaining whether candidates certified to the appointing officer will accept appointment to a particular position is called "determining availability." The responsibility for establishing availability is usually assigned to the civil service agency, as a check on appointing officers who might secure the appointment of a preferred candidate lower on the list by making a false report of refusal by ranking candidates.

Exceptions to this procedure are found, as in Connecticut, where determination of availability is a function of the operating department, but a check against possible dishonesty is provided by requiring a signed waiver of eligibility from candidates who are not interested in the position in question.

In some jurisdictions the appointing officer may, with the approval of the civil service agency, permanently reject one or more names on the certified list, and may then ask for a substitute certification, usually filing with the civil service agency a written statement of his reasons for rejection. If the civil service agency approves his objections it may then certify additional names. If it does not, then he is obliged to consider the candidate whom he wishes to reject as still one of the eligibles from whom he must make his choice. Where the philosophy of the civil service agency, or the attitude of the community toward it, is such that its restrictive function is paramount, regulations concerning rejections are

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likely to be rigid. When emphasis is on service to the operating department, rules on rejection are likely to be flexible.

Selective Certification. A special variation of the ordinary type of certification is known as "selective certification." Occasionally a large eligible list is established, not for a single position, but for a general group of positions in the same or different departments of government. The list is kept in order of rank as a whole and is also divided into sub-lists or "options," each with a group of candidates selected from the master list and arranged in order of rank in relation to their estimated fitness for given types of work. Sometimes both the master list and the "options" may also be subdivided by sex into separate lists. Selective certification from these "options" or from the master list may be made to appointing officers as needed. This is a device to make one examination serve to establish lists for several positions for which basic qualifications are allied.¹

Sometimes "options" are advertised at the time the examination is given; sometimes, in case of a new position or an unexpected vacancy, they are created from an existing list.

This type of certification, like other practices that throw a large burden of responsibility for judgment on the examining agency, would probably have public support only when used by civil service commissions of long standing and unquestioned integrity and only then when limited to relatively technical or professional positions where the basis of selection for the optional list was clear.

PROVISIONAL APPOINTMENT

A list of eligibles may be exhausted before a new examination can be given. A new position may be created for which there is no list. All eligibles may refuse appointment or be rejected. An ex-

¹ This is the practice followed by the United States Civil Service Commission in certifying from the well-known Social Science Analyst options from which names may be certified to the Central Statistical Board, the Federal Children's Bureau, Social Security Board, Indian Service, Veterans' Administration, and other departments of the federal government. A large number of appointments may be made from such a list.

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amination may fail to produce an eligible list. An existing list of eligibles may be declared "vacated" for one reason or another. In any of these five eventualities and possibly in others, there is no register of eligibles. Obviously, temporary or provisional appointments must be made unless the position is to remain unfilled.¹

Civil service agencies, reform organizations, organizations of eligibles, and the general public all realize that in abuse of the privilege of provisional appointment lies opportunity for wrecking the effectiveness of the merit system. There is no doubt that in many cases provisional appointees who could never have qualified on a competitive basis have remained in office for years, and that other provisional appointees have been given undue consideration when they finally took examinations for permanent appointment. For these reasons, in the administration of most merit systems a number of checks and controls are thrown around the procedure for making provisional appointments. In some agencies provisional appointments must be approved by the examining agency before appointees go on the payroll. This not only gives opportunity to determine whether the applicant's qualifications are related, at least on a minimum basis, to the needs of the position; it also serves to guard against making provisional appointments from "outsiders" when the name of a properly qualified person remains on the list for the position in question or for a similar position. Other checks on the misuse of provisional appointments consist in limiting the time a provisional may remain employed without renewal of his status and the number of times such provisional status may be reaffirmed. Control of these checks is usually in the hands of the civil service agency and is commonly made effective through opportunity for payroll review.

PROBATIONARY EMPLOYMENT

Thus far three elements in the process of selection as defined on

¹ In the federal classified service this term is used for a special kind of temporary appointment, subject to satisfactory report on character investigation. It is not used to denote temporary appointments in the absence of registers.

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page 110 have been discussed: entrance qualifications, examinations, and certification of eligibles. Another hurdle for the prospective permanent employe is the period of probationary employment, usually a term of three or six months, that precedes final appointment.

In the states which have civil service commissions or personnel departments, the law provides for a period of probationary employment in all except Colorado and New Mexico. In some jurisdictions the length of the probationary period is fixed by law and in others it is left to the discretion of the board or commission. The administrative departments of Alabama and Maine, and the law of Rhode Island and Tennessee have set the most liberal provision—not less than six months. In Massachusetts the time fixed by the Commission is usually six months; in New York it is usually three months. A six months' period is determined by law in Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin; not more than six months in California and Maryland. Terms of three months or less are the law in Connecticut, Illinois, New Jersey, and Ohio.¹

During the probationary period, an employe is theoretically on trial and in many jurisdictions may be dismissed at will. In the federal classified service the probationary period is now one year, some discretion being allowed the Commission to substitute a six-months' probationary period. Periodic service ratings are required during probation, and dismissals must be on written charges.

This period of probation is essential, first, because examinations, except those for a limited number of positions, cannot test performance although they may yield a prognosis of performance; second, because safeguards thrown around civil service employment usually make it difficult to dismiss a permanent employe, so that some period for proving proficiency is desirable before employes are cemented into the service; and third, because even the most able potential employe may not succeed within the limits of a given situation.

The period of probation therefore may be viewed as a tool for

¹ Information from the Civil Service Reform Association, August, 1939.

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elimination or as a tool for salvage. By means of it obviously unfit persons can be rejected; the person who has undoubted assets, although not for the job in question, may be reserved for another opportunity; the person who is qualified, but who has some difficulty in adjustment, may more readily be helped, while he is still on trial, to accept and profit by friendly criticism than after his permanent status is assured.

Neglect and Abuse of Probationary Appointments. The theory of probationary appointments is excellent, although many employers believe that the usual six-months' probation period is too short, in view of both "new broom" characteristics and the time needed to make adjustments within an organization. In practice, use of the probationary period either as a tool of selection or of adjustment is often neglected to the vanishing point. The employer is too softhearted to dismiss a person who has gone through the ordeal of examination and come out on top; or he has not bothered to devise means of evaluating performance during the period of probation, and having no evidence for action one way or the other, optimistically hopes for the best.¹

The value of the probationary period as a tool of selection can be enhanced by putting responsibility for its effectiveness squarely on the shoulders of the civil service agency. If that agency automatically notifies the operating department in advance of the date for ratifying final appointment and calls for a written statement of the appointing officer's intention together with reasons and substantiating evidence, the latter will be obliged to consider the arguments for and against permanent appointment and to make some factual substantiation of his position, particularly if he is contemplating dismissal. The effectiveness of the probationary period as a tool of staff development cannot, however, be achieved through any such simple measure. Probably nothing but a dynamic interest in, and understanding of, the delicacy of human relationships will lead the employer to use the probation period as a

¹ See pp. 110, 199.

time for experimentation with those whose difficulty seems to be one of personal adjustment.

The probationary period has its liabilities as well as its assets. It may be misused as a means of working down through a list of better qualified eligibles, by a process of hiring and firing, until the name of a desired candidate of inferior grade is reached; or it may be used to exhaust an eligible list in the interest of making a particular provisional appointment.

The danger that this device be used to circumvent the honest application of the merit principle is the consideration which underlay the adoption of the following rule by one agency: "No employer shall demand from any employee before or at the time of appointment any agreement to resign."¹

The longer the probationary period, the less likely is it to be so abused. In the effort to guard against its misuse, a few civil service agencies have adopted the device of dividing the probationary period into halves. During the first half the employee either is not subject to dismissal or may be dismissed only upon a statement sustained by supporting facts subject to investigation. During the second half he may be dismissed at the employer's pleasure, the civil service agency in this instance having no right of review.

The Employment Board for the Department of Public Assistance in Pennsylvania, and the Bureau of Personnel for the Department of Public Welfare and the Unemployment Compensation Division in Indiana, both use this system.

This plan is designed to give the employee a chance to prove himself, to limit the possibility of hiring and firing rapidly for reasons of political maneuvering, and yet to reserve to the employer some opportunity for selection on the basis of performance and some time during which he may determine whether or not difficul-

¹ Rules and Regulations for Merit System Personnel Administration. Employment Board for the Department of Public Assistance of Pennsylvania. Article 200, p. 3.

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ties observed can be corrected by skilful supervision. Were the probationary period to be a year, divided on this plan into two six-months' periods, its usefulness would perhaps be greatly increased.

In considering the desirable length of period, it must be noted that if it is too long, the power of removal will not be exercised early and unsatisfactory employes will thereby gain such equity in the job as to make their removal difficult and painful.

There would, however, seem to be some question as to the reasonableness of providing for a probationary period before final appointment in the case of employes who have a record of satisfactory previous employment in the same job; and further, as to the wisdom of permitting dismissal even during the probationary period without in any way making the appointing authority accountable for its action to the central personnel agency.

The recent dismissal of Dorothy Kahn, Executive Director of the Philadelphia County Board of Assistance, two weeks before the expiration of her six-months' probationary period, raises this point. Miss Kahn had served as Executive Secretary of the Philadelphia County Relief Board for several years. That organization was merged into the new public assistance program in the early months of 1938. At the time of the merger she became Executive Director of the Philadelphia County Board of Assistance, a position which was not identical with but very like the position she had held. Some months thereafter competitive examinations were given for state and county public assistance staff. The Board had opportunity to appoint from the three ranking candidates and it chose Miss Kahn, who was at the top of the eligible list for her position, presumably because of that fact and on her record. Her abrupt dismissal occurred almost six months later, just prior to the expiration of the probationary period. The Employment Board had previously ruled that when a dismissal was made during the second three months of a six-months' probationary period, the charges on which the dismissal was based were not subject to investigation. The nature of the charges, the timing, and other circumstances surrounding the Philadelphia County Board's action have caused many to question the soundness and expediency of including a probationary period of employment in the case of those who may be reappointed under any civil service system to jobs which they have previously held; and also to

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question why the Employment Board (the personnel agency) had no authority in the situation.

Years of service of which there is open record seem a better basis for evaluation than a brief probationary period, when a staff is undergoing administrative upheavals due to its induction under a civil service system. Whether the responsibility in such a case should be on the operating department and the civil service agency to waive the probationary period, or on the potential employe to refuse any but permanent appointment in view of the circumstances, is another question.

CHAPTER XIV

PERIODIC SERVICE RATINGS, PROMOTION, AND SEPARATION FROM SERVICE

THE various elements in selecting personnel for public service on a merit basis have been discussed in the foregoing pages. Selecting staff up to the point of certification is clearly a function of civil service agencies. Appointments having been made from among those certified, the next program is that of staff management, development, and control, to the end that each staff member is enabled to work advantageously, given opportunity for development, and promoted in accordance with ability.

It is apparent that the full responsibility for the task of personnel management cannot rest upon a centralized personnel agency, nor even upon a personnel bureau within an operating department. Management of personnel involves day-to-day contact between executive, supervisor, and staff in which no outside agency can intervene. However, a central personnel agency can devise and, to some extent, supervise the application of methods of management helpful in staff development. The larger and more complicated the organizations served, the more necessary will centralized planning of such methods become. Their success in practice will be measured in large part by the degree of co-operation attained between central personnel agency and operating department in working out basic plans and in testing their suitability. Devising systems for rating performance, and determining the bases and methods of promotions and dismissals are problems in this area of joint effort.¹

NATURE AND USE OF PERIODIC SERVICE RATINGS

In order to plan for staff management and development, it is

¹ For the Standards published by the Social Security Board concerning procedures discussed in the chapter, see pp. 48-49 and Appendix.

necessary to know how well people do their jobs. Rating performance is an important part of the task of daily supervision, and it is also basic to making sound personnel decisions on selection, training, promotion, transfer, demotion, and separation. Really to be useful, performance ratings must be in written form; they must be periodic and cumulative; as objective as possible; and substantiated by records of production and other evidence which is developed from the supervisor's day-to-day contacts with the worker, and recorded as it develops.

Two elements, at least, are necessary to achieve valuable service ratings: one, a workable system of recording fact and opinion on quantity and quality of performance, and of translating these into comparable units of measurement; and, two, thorough understanding by those who are to do the rating of the objectives and problems in using such a system. The second of these elements is more important than the first but less frequently emphasized. In service ratings, as in the case of grading essay questions or testing by the interview method, consistency and objectivity on the part of raters can make even a relatively poor system work with some effectiveness. Attention must be given, therefore, not only to the rating scheme itself, but to thorough education of those who are to use it. Too often rating systems consist of no more than records of supervisory opinions entered in summary form once or twice a year, until some central agency such as a civil service commission requires that a definite system of forms be installed. Forms are then hastily devised and put into use before the "deadline" date, with little explanation given to the staff that is to be evaluated, and little preparation given to those who are to do the rating. Far better results are obtained when written instructions and explanations are circulated well in advance, and when individual and group conferences of those responsible for doing the rating are held before the new system goes into effect. Indeed, such conferences are a desirable adjunct to the continued use of a rating system.

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To set up an effective system of service ratings¹ means, first, to devise criteria and norms for measurement of quantity and quality, and second, to provide a system of applying those norms that will minimize the element of subjectivity in the rater's judgment. It is relatively easy to devise methods for measuring quantity of production in positions where results are measurable in units, and for measuring quality of production in positions from which tangible products result, as in trades or in certain clerical processes. Where the work to be measured is of executive or supervisory nature or where results depend upon intangibles as in some of the professions, difficulties in both aspects of the problem are greatly increased.

Business, motivated by financial necessity for elimination of waste, has long been concerned with ways of measuring how well people are doing their jobs. Government has not felt this urge to the same degree, partly at least because of the fact that under old-line civil service regimes when people were "in" they were in to stay. Of recent years, however, the concept of tenure in government service has evolved to the point where more emphasis is being placed on efficiency and less on seniority in promotion and retention of jobs. It is recognized that the final test of the usefulness of examination procedures is in the quality of performance of those who secure appointments through them.

Laws establishing several formal state merit systems, chiefly those more recently developed, have acknowledged the basic necessity for developing some objective criterion of performance by specifying that the civil service agency shall devise and supervise a system of service ratings. Some laws specify uses to which service

¹ Service rating should be carefully distinguished from personality rating. The former is a measure of performance only, the latter a type of aptitude analysis, although it may be substantiated from evidence of performance. In measuring performance in a field where personality contributes the lion's share toward vocational success or failure, the evaluation of personality is an important factor, although it does not constitute the whole story of performance. For discussion of the various rating scales in use, see *Public Personnel Administration*, by William E. Mosher and J. Donald Kingsley, Harper and Bros., New York, 1936, pp. 427-443.

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ratings shall be put, as in Tennessee, Connecticut, Maryland, and New York State.

The Feld-Hamilton Act, passed in New York State, June 3, 1937, asserts that it is the policy of the state "to provide equal pay for equal work, and regular increases in pay in proper proportion to increase of ability, increase of output and increase of quality of work demonstrated in service." It establishes a salary standardization board to re-allocate all positions in the classified civil service according to stated salary groupings. The problem of measuring increase in ability, output, and quality it makes a joint function of the department head concerned and the Civil Service Commission, but specifies that the basis of evaluation "shall be posted or published and shall, so far as practicable, be uniform throughout the service."¹

The responsibility for developing a system of service ratings in any given jurisdiction may be assigned to the central personnel agency because its administrators or those responsible for setting up the program have had a broad conception of function and have seen evaluation of performance as an integral part of personnel management. On the other hand, a service rating program may have been instituted in response to a suddenly appearing specific need, such as the necessity for providing a base for annual salary increments as in New York; or for suddenly laying off a large part of the personnel as in the State Emergency Relief Board of Pennsylvania. Whatever may be its occasion, a service rating plan once devised can become the yardstick against which the effectiveness of all other personnel functions are measured. Performance in the job of those persons who ranked high on examination as compared with those who ranked low is the ultimate test of the validity of a total examination, of any of the component parts, or of the validity of single items in a written test. Any judgment about the reasonableness of a set of entrance qualifications, or about recruiting for personnel with a particular background, is likewise undependable until checked against performance records of people with and without such backgrounds. Salary increments, promotions in re-

¹ Chapter 859 of Laws of New York, secs. 1, 3, 4, and 41.

sponsibility, layoffs, dismissals—all lose meaning and are hard to defend if not based on a relatively effective and detailed story of accomplishment or the lack of it. How can an in-service training program be devised beyond the induction stage without information on caliber of performance that will indicate on what points training should focus? How can scholarships be awarded by public departments as part of their program of training without some relatively objective measures to determine who can use them to best advantage?

Even letters of reference—those thorns in the flesh of those who write and receive them—could be less inadequate and general were they based on effective rating systems, or rather on the recorded evidence which a rating system calls forth, and on which the actual ratings should be based. At present they frequently give neither any idea of what the employe did nor of how he did it, and indicate only how the supervisor feels about him. It should be relatively easy to make references specific in terms of job requirements and fulfilment, and as free from the charge of subjectivity as is the particular system of service ratings on which they are based.

The Joint Vocational Service (a national professional employment service for social workers which in December, 1939, discontinued operations) had for years a standing committee on letters of reference, whose task was to devise ways of standardizing reference writing, of making references relate to performance, and of minimizing the element of subjectivity in evaluation. The committee's efforts were hampered by the fact that there exists no easily available recorded evidence on performance in agencies which are asked to write references, and further, that even were references objective and specific, there would still be needed some criterion for evaluating the standards of the agency whose opinions are being submitted.

Types of Service Rating Plans. The commonest method of making service ratings requires merely that supervisors write summary statements about those under their direction, pointing out weak and strong points and indicating progress or retrogression. Individual summaries of this kind may be fair and penetrating, but

they are as difficult to make comparable or to score as the answers to essay test items. Attempts have been made to meet this difficulty by devising uniform scoring sheets containing lists of items on which all employes are to be scored, space being provided for special items for special groups. To eliminate individual differences inherent in applying a numerical scale, itemization under each heading is in the form of a word or phrase describing several possible degrees of possessing or lacking a particular trait. The supervisor checks under each heading the description which most nearly fits the employe whose work is being evaluated. These checks are then translated into a numerical or other score by the personnel department.

One of the widely known and used rating systems which attempts to make the rating process more objective is the Probst system, discussed in detail in *Service Ratings*, a manual published jointly by the Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada and the Chicago Bureau of Public Personnel Administration.¹

Several variations of the Probst service report form are in use—for the police, and for educational, professional, clerical, and other groups of workers. The principle of evaluation is the same in all. A list of traits is given, to be checked if possible by three superiors for each employe. The supervisor checks only those items on which he has a definite judgment. Those listed tend to be outstanding traits; average or neutral traits are either not included or not scored. The traits are keyed as plus or minus, on the basis of whether they are desirable or undesirable, and given a numerical value depending on their importance in relation to a specific job. The number of plus items checked is designated as the X score; the sum of the numerical values of all the plus and minus items is designated as the Y score. The final numerical score is derived by carefully calculated formulae from the relation of the X and Y scores, and in it the spread between the two scores as well as the combined value is considered. The final individual score is translated from numbers into letters on a scale of A to E.

The main values claimed for the Probst and allied systems are that they relieve the supervisor of the necessity of ranking his staff; that they

¹ Technical bulletin no. 4. The Assembly, Chicago, 1931. J. B. Probst is chief examiner for the Civil Service Bureau of St. Paul, Minnesota.

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avoid setting a fixed value on any characteristic, but score a balance of values; that they are easy to use and understand and are therefore not distrusted; and that they distinguish not only inferior and superior employees but borderline cases.

The Probst system is not cited here to imply that it is the most desirable service rating scheme, or that it can be applied without considerable revision to social work positions. It is described here because its methodology may be worth considering in future attempts to perfect rating procedures. The principles underlying the Probst system have already been adapted and further refined in other rating scales more recently developed.

This type of scoring device standardizes items to be scored and reduces somewhat the dangers both of deliberate discrimination and of influence of the "halo" effect.¹ The element of subjectivity in checking descriptive items still remains. Some supervisors will always be prejudiced; some will always be optimistic and some pessimistic about the grade of work done by their staff. Subjectivity may be reduced, however, by having all employees scored by two or three supervisors independently or by using the method of group conference. Rating by superior officers may be only part of the basis of evaluation, the other being a series of periodic tests.

This was the system used in local units of the Pennsylvania State Emergency Relief Board prior to the large layoff of staff in the latter part of 1935. Composite evaluations of each employee included both scores in a performance test and scores on analysis of performance made by supervisors, the two being combined according to a formula suggested by the state office. Some flexibility was permitted in the order of rank observed in layoffs, such factors as need and length of service being also taken into account.²

¹ "Halo" is a term much used in civil service and personnel parlance to describe the tendency to let feeling or judgment about one characteristic or aspect of an individual color the evaluation of other factors or of the total personality. We react favorably to John Doe's appearance, or his sense of humor, and jump forthwith to the conclusion that he has a number of other desirable characteristics, as to his possession or lack of which we have no evidence. "Halo" effect can be positive or negative.

² Description of a Tentative Procedure for Evaluating the Work of Investigators and Junior Supervisors, by C. R. Adams and C. H. Smeltzer. State Emergency Relief Administration, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, September, 1935.

Some supervisors seem unable to differentiate between staff members as to order of excellence—they are all “good” or they are all “fair.” One system which has been used to obviate this difficulty is to list a group of attributes and require that all employes be ranged in order of rank in relation to each attribute. The average rank of each is then computed from the separate rank scores. One objection to this system is that it only determines rank in relation to other employes and not in relation to a norm.

In another type of rating scale a given number of attributes is similarly listed, but the person doing the scoring is asked to select some one employe whom he considers as “par” for each class of position and to score other employes in relation to that individual. The major difficulty here might seem to lie in the selection of the pacemaker!

A number of unsolved problems still exists in relation to all rating scales. Should employes be rated against an absolute standard of excellence, or against performance of other employes in similar jobs? If both criteria are to be used, how can they be combined?

Is it desired to rate quality of performance as it exists at the time of the rating, or improvement in quality from one rating period to another? If the latter, what norms of expected improvement is it reasonable to set? How should these vary in relation to the degree of excellence already attained? Surely, the same improvement cannot be expected from the worker who already rates 95 in relation to a given attribute as from a worker who rates 75. And what happens in succeeding ratings when the first worker attains 99.9? Also, how can ratings on present performance and progress be combined to give fair value to each?

Another problem is how to determine the basis of measuring original or creative work in supervisory, executive, or professional positions. How far can production of new ideas be considered to be almost a routine part of such assignments? Can a service rating scheme be so devised as to render no more than the credit due for original contribution in positions where such contribution is ex-

pected, but at the same time to give a high score for originality which crops up unexpectedly?

In a system of service rating recently devised by the New York State Civil Service Commission this problem is raised. The system provides that, in addition to the ordinary bases of scoring efficiency on which an employe may make a maximum score of 87, an unusually satisfactory or meritorious specific service may earn him a "plus" value of from three to five points a year. Unsatisfactory service of specific and describable nature may result in a deduction of five to ten points. The former is cumulative, the latter is not. The system has the advantage of providing incentive and reward for service "above and beyond the call of duty," and of making some attempt to measure progress as well as proficiency. It would seem to have the disadvantage of giving disproportionate opportunity to earn extra rating credits to those in the higher brackets, the nature of whose work may call for original or creative effort, or to those who, because they are strategically placed in the organization, are able to see opportunities to improve procedures.

Special difficulties occur in using rating scales to determine whether probational appointments should be confirmed as permanent. Ideally, a special scale might be used for the probationary period, at least in jurisdictions where the period is short, in which heavy weight would be given to such items as "effort," "willingness and capacity to learn," "willingness to admit mistakes," or "flexibility." If the rating scale for permanent employes is used, then it would seem that a reweighting of some items is indicated for the probationary period or that a supplemental list of factors be provided on which employes should be marked for this period only. Obviously, emphasis in rating new employes should be on capacity for, rather than on expertness in performance. Especially if the probationary period be a short one, it is more important to know what an employe can learn, than what he has learned.

In devising any rating scale, the rating officer should be required to mark only those items for each employe on which he has a definite opinion and preferably definite evidence. Computation of the final score should then be made only on the items marked. If

there are 10 possible attributes to be checked and the supervisor is able to evaluate John Doe only in relation to 8, then the score may be computed on a scale of 80 instead of on a scale of 100. If the supervisor is required to check all items, there is danger that some judgments will be groundless, or that the supervisor will describe Mr. Doe as "average" in relation to a quality about Mr. Doe's possession or lack of which he is totally uninformed.

Attitude of Employes toward Service Ratings. How employes feel about service ratings seems to depend on two factors: first, the uses to which ratings are put, and second, the degree of frankness that accompanies their use. Employe groups, organized or unorganized, are traditionally suspicious of studies and measures of production, largely because they may be, and often have been, used as a basis for making staff reductions.

In the practice of state civil service commissions, service ratings seem rarely if ever to be used openly as a basis for layoffs and dismissals.

In the federal government and in certain of the newer departmental merit systems there is provision that layoffs, transfers, and dismissals as well as promotions shall be made on the basis of service ratings. This procedure is established by law in Idaho, and by departmental regulation in Oregon, Indiana, and Missouri. The departmental agency in Florida, on the other hand, follows the older civil service tradition of using service ratings for promotions only.¹

Public employes are in a sense their own employers. There is a tradition about inviolability of tenure of office in civil service employment which the public has come to recognize. This tradition is tied up with the long struggle of organized labor for recognition of seniority rights. Public employes can bring influence to bear in a way that is embarrassing for the civil service agency if the latter should institute a system that seems to threaten security of tenure. For this reason, civil service agencies have not generally empha-

¹ Data from *The Merit Principle in the Selection of Public Welfare Personnel*. See footnote one, p. 50.

sized the use of service ratings as a basis for dismissals, but rather as a basis for salary advance, promotion, or transfer. Apparently, employes accept more readily the reasonableness of giving preference to efficiency over seniority as a basis for promotion than as a basis for selection of those to be retained in time of layoff.

A layoff system recently devised by J. B. Probst is based on a combination of the two principles of efficiency and seniority. Because this is a recent development, it is not yet possible to know how it will be received by employes.

The system provides that the ten possible letter-scores from E— to A for the Probst service rating system¹ be translated into numerical scores from 1 to 10. The equivalent score for the average service rating for each employe over the last four rating periods is increased by one point for each five years of service. The resulting score is the layoff score and employes are to be laid off in order as necessary beginning with those with the lowest score. The formula was tested by submitting 20 pairs of cases to 24 judges, a group composed equally of employes, personnel experts, and employers. The correlation between the layoff scores and the judges' opinion is not stated, but it was apparently high enough to warrant the assumption that the formula had validity.²

Certainly, a rating system that is developed with full co-operation of management and staff of operating department, and is therefore realistically related to content of position, is less likely to meet with opposition than a theoretically worded and vague-sounding scheme imposed from without, a type of rating system which may result if civil service agencies develop rating plans independently and spring them when complete on the staff of operating departments.

There is apparently some tendency toward increasing frankness about the process of arriving at service rating scores and toward opening a service evaluation to inspection of the employe concerned.

¹ See p. 196.

² News item in section on Municipal Finance and Personnel, *in* Public Management, April, 1938, p. 114.

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The state plan for the public welfare department in Oregon and the rules and regulations of the Bureau of Personnel in Indiana, for example, specify that service ratings are to be open to employe inspection. The same is true either by rule or by custom in certain other states, but not in all. Personnel procedures for the Maryland Board of State Aid and Charities specify that service ratings are to be kept confidential, although the law itself merely specifies that a system of ratings shall be installed.

The franker and more liberal method is based on the theory that to know all is to understand all, and that once the nature and purpose of service ratings are understood, there will be less tendency toward obstructionist tactics on the part of employes, in relation to their installation or use. Moreover, the all-important educational value of service ratings would seem to be enhanced by considering them as "open covenants openly arrived at."

PROMOTION

Promotion is interpreted to mean assigning an individual to another position which involves greater difficulty or more responsibility. Such assignment is usually accompanied by increased compensation. Promotions in this sense are distinct from salary increases which may be, and in agencies under a merit regime usually are, from time to time awarded to employes in recognition of length of service or increased usefulness.¹ Promotion is also distinct from transfer, which refers to change of assignment to another position on the same level. Promotional avenues in the public service at best are limited, owing to the relatively few opportunities to shift from department to department, and to the relatively small number of supervisory positions as compared with the mass of subordinate jobs.

Promotion is another function of personnel management which may be viewed either as a departmental responsibility, or a responsibility of a central personnel bureau, and which is probably best

¹ The term "administrative promotion," however, has been used in federal legislation to designate salary increase within a given grade.

handled when the two share the burden. The operating department feels the need of filling the position and often has a candidate for it from within or from outside the organization. The modern centralized government personnel bureau has the long-time view of promotion policy and does not always see the immediate need. In some recently passed laws responsibility for control of promotions is laid squarely on the civil service agency. This is probably to protect the continuity of a promotional policy and also because examinations—admittedly a civil service function—are an inherent part of promotional procedure under a merit system. No promotional policy, however, seems likely to give satisfaction to administration, the public, and employes, in which immediate departmental needs are not recognized, or in which active co-operation of department administrators is not secured.

Giving promotional examinations has long been a function of civil service agencies. The adoption, however, of a long-time promotional policy governing personnel management in public service, from classification to separation or retirement, is a relatively new development. The policy of an examining agency as to promotion is tied up with its policy concerning recruitment, as previously indicated.¹ Is emphasis placed on recruiting for jobs or for careers? If for the latter, then not only must the general educational level at entrance to government service be made high, but avenues of promotion must be made clear and accessible, service ratings must be weighed as a basis for promotion, training opportunities must be available to prepare employes for promotion, and, whenever feasible, some limitation will probably also be put on outside competition for better positions.

A good classification system is a great aid to making clear such promotion avenues as do exist. Classification, however, is a description of what is rather than what should be, and as such it cannot be expected to create promotional avenues.

¹ See footnote, p. 36.

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If the service is not organized so as to provide a sufficient number of career avenues for employees, it is not the function of classification to correct that fault. To relieve that situation calls for reorganization and redistribution of work and responsibility, for the express purpose of creating promotional opportunities where they are needed. Action of this type, when carried into effect, results in corresponding changes in the classification plan itself. . . .¹

Another aid to the clarification of promotional avenues is a promotional chart.² This is an organization chart covering all types of positions and indicating potential promotional lines from position to position. If promotions from one department to another are possible, the chart should show this fact. A promotional chart is an important derivative of a classification system; unless based on classification it would be undependable.

As service ratings become more objective, and therefore more dependable, they will undoubtedly play a larger part in the promotion plan.

Problems of Competition. Conflicting interests are involved in the question of limiting outside competition in making promotions. The civil service agency, with its concern for careers for public employes, and the public employes' union, with its concern for promoting the interests of present staff, tend to emphasize the advantages of limiting competition of outsiders in promotion. Operating departments, with their anxiety about filling the immediate vacancy with the best-qualified person are likely to combine forces with professional associations in arguing for unlimited competition of qualified outsiders with present staff. Professional associations are motivated by two considerations. The first and most important is their very genuine concern for standards of service to

¹ From Facts and Fallacies about Position-Classification, by Ismar Baruch. Pamphlet no. 10. Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada, Chicago, November, 1937, p. 21.

² A discussion of promotional charts and ways of making them is found in Personnel Management: Principles, Practices, and Point of View by Walter Dill Scott, Robert C. Clothier, and Stanley B. Mathewson, chap. 10, pp. 141-150. McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York, 1931.

the public in their respective fields. To these standards they feel any lowering of professional qualifications is a threat. Second is their urge to establish their professional entity in the public mind. This consideration makes them resist any tendency to give advantage in competition to persons whose qualifications do not yet meet certain professionally desirable minima. The professional view is that to limit opportunities for promotion to those in lower positions in the same or other departments may set a "ceiling" on qualifications for a given position which would be avoided if competition were open to the qualified public.

Wide differences exist in practice on this question of restricting competition for promotional opportunities. Here and there examinations for promotion to advanced positions in a given department are open only to staff members; these are then known as "promotional examinations." Occasionally they are only qualifying examinations,¹ when one person is the obvious choice for promotion. Sometimes examinations for higher positions in the organization are open to outsiders as well. The only advantage to incumbents in that event is intimate knowledge of the job.

In such instances it is possible to introduce an unseen differential by writing the examination so closely around the duties of a particular position that outsiders could not be expected to know the answers to many items. This would seem to be a questionable practice since, when it is employed, outside contestants enter the examination under the impression that they will be accorded an equal competitive chance. They are not likely to accept gracefully the unwelcome revelation that such is not the case.

Sometimes in giving examinations that are strictly promotional only those who meet set qualifications for the position in question are admitted to competition. In other instances anyone on the staff who wishes may compete. The choice between these policies is likely to be affected by prevailing policies in setting special or gen-

¹ See p. 121 and footnote one.

eral requirements for positions open to public competition. If the agency usually requires special training and experience for positions open to competition from the public, this may influence its standard of acceptance for applications from staff members who wish to take promotional examinations.

Central personnel agencies often prefer to write entrance requirements for any position in a hierarchy in such a way that those who have completed a satisfactory period in the position below it may be allowed to take the examination. The operating department, which sees dangers involved in thus admitting persons who are qualified by experience, rather than by training *and* experience, is likely to oppose this plan. Those incumbents who are obliged to take examinations to secure permanent status and are interested in self-protection, are quite likely to combine with the department in this opposition.

Factors other than the general philosophy of the examining agency affect freedom of competition in promotion. In particular instances, the supply of available material within the operating department and its competence as compared with that of possible competitors on the outside may affect application of a general policy. The nature of the work in some departments, such as research and scientific bureaus, does not tend to develop executive or supervisory ability. Filling vacancies in the upper brackets of responsibility under such circumstances often necessitates bringing in outsiders.

The factor of seniority still plays some part in determining promotional policies of modern civil service agencies, but it is probably not influential to the same degree as in the past.

The reconciliation of philosophical long-view policies of promotion with the immediate strains and pressures arising out of particular cases may perhaps be most soundly accomplished through the joint decision of the civil service agency and the individual responsible for personnel administration of the operating department involved. In the end, cumulative service ratings of those pro-

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moted will provide a partial check in retrospect on the wisdom of a particular decision.

SEPARATION FROM SERVICE

Separations from service include layoffs occurring because of reduction, completion, or shift of program, or because of budgetary restrictions; dismissals on account of misconduct or obvious incompetence; and retirement, which is a layoff on account of age.

The problem of layoffs is not a serious one in public welfare departments at the present time because of the expanding social security program. It has been a serious problem in other government departments throughout the depression. It may become important in public welfare departments after the developmental period is over. Major organizational shifts such as that from emergency relief to social security have been the chief cause of layoffs in public welfare programs of recent years.

What trends in policy are discernible in relation to the accepted bases of making separations from government service? Securing tenure for civil service employes was the all-important function of civil service commissions in the early days when wholesale turnover of staff was likely to result from a shift in political control. Being in a civil service job meant getting a job by a competitive examination, it is true, but thereafter holding it "for life." Not only must people be got in without political interference, they must be allowed to stay in. And stay in they did. Laws and rules included elaborate provisions circumscribing conditions of dismissal in the classified state and federal services. While efficiency was often mentioned as a condition of continuing employment, the procedure for proving lack of it was so formal that any attempt at dismissal on grounds other than obvious misconduct was likely to turn into a trial of the administrator rather than of the employe whose dismissal was in question. Consequently few were dismissed. Few left voluntarily because of the joys of security of tenure and anticipated pensions. The intent to protect those in the classified

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service against arbitrary dismissal was a commendable one, but evils that accompanied protection went far to bring civil service into general disrepute.

In addition to problems created by tenure provisions on dismissals, there are complications in relation to other forms of separation from service. When layoffs have occurred, employe groups have pressed successfully against the consideration of any factor but seniority as a criterion. This meant that the younger, more recently recruited staff was laid off first and the older and less adaptable members retained. The retirement age, usually sixty-five or seventy when specified, was sometimes left to the discretion of the employer. In this situation he was obliged to consider, in making layoffs and retirements alike, not only length of service but veteran status, nearness to pensionable age, marital or family status, and the whole question of need. If an existing pension plan was niggardly or was actuarially unsound, with the result that funds were inadequate, the tendency was to use the public payroll in lieu of pensions in order to provide for the old age of deserving civil servants. The situation thus created did not encourage ambition, creativeness, and originality.

Over a period of years these conditions have been slowly changing. It is possible that the pendulum is now swinging somewhat too far in the direction of emphasizing merit as opposed to tenure. Elaborate provisions for selection are being set up in many departmental merit systems with nothing said about tenure. When this becomes generally known it may result in opening the door to the old evil of political maneuvering.

For example, the State Merit Commission of the State Welfare Board of Florida has developed a system of selection on the merit principle for state and district staffs with examinations for the latter, but tenure is subject to the pleasure of the State Board for the state staff and the District Boards and State Board for the district staffs.

A reasonable approach to the problem would seem to be that provisions as to tenure be sufficiently explicit to protect staff from

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dismissal on personal, trivial, or political grounds, but that, since the public has a right to efficient service, provisions for separation should include consideration of merit and be flexible enough to assure work of a high standard.

Recent civil service legislation, as opposed to the trend in some departmental merit systems, tends toward incorporating the following principles with respect to tenure and separation: retention of the job on the basis of efficiency—this to be measured by periodic ratings, with automatic dismissal if ratings fall below a given level; layoffs based upon consideration of seniority and service ratings with provision for re-employment on the basis of individual ratings, in preference to other eligibles; automatic retirement at a reasonable age with an adequate and actuarially sound pension provision, including in the future, it is to be hoped, the federal old age benefits from which public employes are now excluded; free access for the employe to the records of his own service rating; and a fair and usable procedure for appeals against separation if the employe disagrees with the verdict on his own performance.

CHAPTER XV

MISCELLANEOUS ASPECTS OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

IN ADDITION to the subjects discussed in the chapters immediately preceding—namely, classification of positions, recruitment, selection, evaluation, promotion, and separation from service—there remain for more summary discussion a few other aspects of personnel management which are less clearly within the province of civil service agencies or less germane to the purposes of this study. These include in-service training, provisions for vacations and leaves, methods of handling appeals, safety and health, and other such programs as may be instituted by employing agencies for the benefit of employes, or by employes themselves. No attempt is made in this chapter to discuss methods of carrying out these functions, but rather to point out how they may be affected by a centrally administered merit system. The new rules promulgated, for instance, by the Social Security Board (see Appendix), are a case in point.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Training that follows employment and is directed toward improving performance on the job, has been for years an important function of some departments of government, while in others it has been neglected or has not been recognized as necessary. Two recent developments seem destined to bring in-service training into sharp focus. The President's Executive Order of 1938, amending the civil service rules, provided that "The Civil Service Commission shall, in co-operation with operating departments and establishments, the Office of Education, and public and private institutions of learning, establish practical training courses for employees in the departmental and field services of the classified civil

service, and may by regulations provide credits in transfer and promotion examinations for satisfactory completion of one or more of such training courses.”¹ Thus for the first time a mandate was given for establishing a unified system of in-service training for the whole federal classified service.

Also, recent laws establishing civil service commissions or state personnel departments in Arkansas,² Tennessee, and Connecticut have specified the development of an in-service training program for the several state departments, and have assigned responsibility for this function to the agency administering the merit plan.

While training is part of the whole problem of building a staff, and as such, perhaps, comes logically within the general sphere of activity of centralized personnel agencies, in-service training, or training for function, is so closely associated with day-to-day performance on the job that the closest co-operation with department heads is essential to effective operation. This principle is clearly specified in the federal executive order. In the words of Ismar Baruch, “When we speak of in-service training we have to break it up into planning, organizing, and coordinating, which are staff functions, and operating, which is a line function.”³ The several civil service commissions operating under the new mandates will presumably take on the staff functions of planning and co-ordinating the total in-service programs for all departments, and department heads will assume the line function of conducting the proposed program.

Social work, in common with other professions, has tried to maintain a clear demarcation between the several types of training which may be necessary or incident to performance in a professional field. Of these, training in graduate schools established for the purpose is increasingly considered an essential prerequisite to

¹ Executive Order No. 7916, Order Extending the Competitive Classified Service, June 24, 1938, sec. 8.

² This law has since been repealed. See p. 43.

³ Proceedings of the Conference on In-Service Training in the Federal Government, January 14 and 15, 1939. Education Committee, District of Columbia Council United Federal Workers of America, Washington, D. C., Part II, p. 2.

activity which is truly professional in character. It is rarely provided by management for employes except in cases where scholarships for attendance at professional schools are awarded to a few selected individuals.

Pre-professional training, or general academic education in colleges and universities, is a necessary forerunner of graduate professional training. Opportunity for acquiring pre-professional or general academic education may be afforded to employes through allowing time off, or by rearranging work hours to conform with school schedules. While employes are often encouraged to take general academic courses, it is not usually considered a function of management to provide them.

Apprenticeship training, or tutelage given on the job and by experienced workers in fundamental techniques and concepts, is sometimes substituted by management for professional training. While apprenticeship training may be an acceptable form of preparation for trades and crafts, it is felt by members of professions to be a poor substitute for the broad basic education in underlying principles and techniques which is characteristic of professional training as this is commonly conceived. Indeed, one of the accepted signs that a field of human activity has become a profession is the very fact that it has divorced itself from the apprenticeship system of training.

In-service training, on the other hand, as distinguished from apprenticeship training, has been regarded by the professions as a desirable supplement to professional training. It is a program conducted by operating departments and designed to help all workers, with whatever previous training, to adapt their equipment to the demands of a particular situation. It may include an orientation or "vestibule" course in which new workers are familiarized with the program, functions, objectives, and regulations of an agency; it may include supervisory conferences, staff meetings, directed readings, group discussions, and courses. Much of in-service training is synonymous with what we commonly think of as supervision.

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It is focused on improving performance in the currently held position rather than on equipping the worker to advance to new responsibility.

The in-service training program specified in the Executive Order of 1938 has a slightly different character: it is focused not only on improving performance in the present job but on preparing for the job that is above it. The order clearly states that credit toward promotion may be given for completion of one or more in-service training courses. The projected program is predicated on the "career" principle that promotion should be from within and that government has some obligation to prepare for promotion.

In the well-established professions and in fields where there is an adequate supply of trained people, such a change of focus in regard to in-service training may have little effect on general professional standards. In other fields in which standards of training are still evolving or where there is a shortage of trained people, it may have the effect of reviving the apprenticeship system. This would mean offering to those workers in sub-professional positions who do not have previous professional training or even basic academic education, an opportunity to acquire a makeshift equipment by means of which they can progress to positions for which full professional training should be required. If such a situation develops it may prove to be one of the stumbling blocks to agreement between the central personnel agency and the professionally trained administrator. The possibility suggests that each profession may need to distinguish those positions which are clearly professional from those which are on the borderline, in order that requirements for promotion to strictly professional responsibilities may include completion of more than in-service training courses.

PROVISION FOR VACATIONS AND LEAVES

While government provisions for vacations and leaves may not in many instances be so liberal nor so flexible as those in industry and the professions, government as an employer has probably set

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higher minimum standards on these matters for all types of employees than has industry, except in the most progressive or the largest organizations.¹

The findings of the reports of the Personnel Classification Board previously quoted,² on the matter of leaves and retirements, are as follows:

Finding no. 15:

The leave privileges in the Federal Service are generally more liberal than those in private employment.

Finding no. 16:

Non-Government employers do not generally provide retirement systems, but in some cases systems even more liberal than the Federal retirement plan are provided, such as group insurance and co-operative stock-purchasing plans.

On the question of leaves and vacations in social work positions under government auspices and in privately supported social agencies the impression of persons familiar with the field is that there is greater liberality on the part of the private agency.

Maternity leave is apparently the most neglected provision in civil service regulations on leaves.³ Government as an employer does not seem enthusiastic about married women in government service. The extreme of this point of view is exemplified in Rhode Island where no married woman whose husband is earning more than \$30 a week may be employed by the state.

Organizations of civil service employees have played a large part in winning for public employees in general existing minimum

¹ See photostatic report compiled by Beatrice Hager for the New York Municipal Reference Library, May, 1935, Digest of Provisions of Civil Service Laws and Rules Relating to Vacations, Leaves of Absence, Sick Leave, and Other Special Privileges and Restrictions. This digest covers practices on the above in 24 cities, 5 states and 1 county. It includes practices in such details as provisions made for leaves in cases of contagion, family illness and death, the types of proof of personal illness required, and compensation for overtime in pay and time off.

² Closing Report of Wage and Personnel Survey. Personnel Classification Board. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1931, p. 127.

³ However, federal leave regulations specify that pregnancy and confinement are among the reasons for which sick leave may be granted.

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standards on these points. They are constantly trying to raise standards further through the introduction of more liberal legislation.

METHODS OF HANDLING APPEALS

Use of the power to appeal decisions has had a marked influence in the history of civil service in assuring fair and equitable procedures. Publicity attendant upon hearings keeps the public aware of difficulties. The fact that the right of appeal is inherent in most laws creating civil service systems places some control upon administrative decisions even though resort to appeal against such decisions be rare.

Some common subjects of appeal are: rejection of candidates on the basis of entrance requirements; the nature of examination or the method of scoring; actual scores given on parts or all of the examination; individual rank on the basis of scores; the nature of provisional, probationary, or permanent appointments; form, basis, use, or scores of service ratings; decisions on vacations, leaves, and salary rates; promotions, transfers, and separations from service; and decisions on retirement and pensions in individual cases.

In some jurisdictions, appeals may be made to the commission or board governing the civil service agency; in others, to a special board set up for that purpose; and in still others, only to the courts. The form of appeal boards and the special procedures provided by law or adopted by regulation in various jurisdictions differ so widely that no attempt is made here to analyze them. It may be pointed out, however, that if a mechanism for handling appeals is set up as part of the merit system itself, court action, with its attendant delays, expense, and publicity concerning matters which can be otherwise adjusted, may be avoided in many cases.

All formally established state civil service agencies and many local civil service agencies are charged either by law or by rule with responsibility for establishing some type of machinery to investigate or hear appeals. Procedure after hearings varies greatly from

one jurisdiction to another, as may be seen by noting differences in authority in relation to contested dismissals from service. In some instances decision of the commission is final on matters of removal.

By administrative order a Board of Appeals and Review was established in 1930 in the United States Civil Service Commission. This body may investigate and advise in cases of dispute, except in cases of appeal from the rulings of the commissioners, but decision remains with the appointing officer. Discharged employes in the federal government and in certain smaller jurisdictions are given no legal recourse. Similar differences exist in the amount of authority accorded commissions in relation to appeals on other counts.

Most merit systems set up as adjuncts to single state departments, as heretofore noted, are given only a general statutory charge to set standards for personnel.¹ Any appeal procedure developed by them is therefore likely to be voluntarily established. This type of departmental merit program is so new that appeal procedures in connection with such a program have in many instances not yet been devised. They will undoubtedly be forthcoming in time, for a standardized system of selecting personnel seems inevitably to result in development of appeals which sooner or later necessitate some formal machinery for adjudication.

With the rise of pressure groups, appeals have become increasingly effective as a control on civil service procedures. Such groups may be composed of any of the following: staff members of the department in which a merit system is to be inaugurated; civil service employes, either unorganized or organized; organized "eligibles"; other individuals seeking special privilege, such as veterans or taxpayers; those interested in civil service reform. Whatever their constituency, pressure groups may provide funds, weight of opinion, or numbers of votes that throw great power behind an individual appeal. It is interesting to speculate, for example, how the election of state representatives from a given locality might be af-

¹ See p. 50.

fectured by the organized vote of all the civil service employes of a large state institution located in a small town, and what effect this might have on the outcome of civil service appeal cases.

The civil service agency that is beset with appeals backed by the force of pressure groups has the alternative of excluding the public from its decisions so far as possible, or inviting the public to scrutinize its procedures and bases for decisions. The tendency seems to be in the latter direction. While most examining agencies offer, when time and other conditions permit, to go over an individual examination score with any candidate who wishes to come to the office for that purpose, the Municipal Civil Service Commission of New York City publishes in the newspapers its examinations, keys used for scoring, and final grades awarded.¹ This increases enormously the hazards of preparing examinations and keys, and may stimulate and facilitate appeals. It may also relieve pressure by getting facts out into the open and airing them. Most examining agencies seem to feel that to publish examination keys or even texts of examinations is to borrow trouble, since bases for building and scoring examinations are technical matters which the general public cannot be expected to understand. Another undesirable effect of giving publicity to test questions and answers is the encouragement and valuable material that such practice gives to "cram" schools.²

When appeal is to the courts, a special difficulty arises from the fact that different courts in a single civil service jurisdiction may have very different ideas about the court's responsibility in relation to civil service practice, and may also have different conceptions of what should be the aim and purpose of civil service agencies.

¹ A recent newspaper announcement seems to indicate that the New York State Civil Service Commission is about to experiment with this same policy.

² Chance to study a compilation of questions and answers used over a five- or ten-year period to test for any given subject may be worth any candidate's ten dollars. It is this opportunity that the "cram" school provides. Acquisition of knowledge by a parrot-like system of learning neither presupposes that the knowledge is the candidate's permanently, nor that he is better equipped than his competitor who has to think out rather than recall his answers.

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Suit may be brought against the action of the civil service agency on almost any aspect of its program. While the case wends its weary way through lower courts to higher, appointments must be considered temporary, procedures may be open to immediate change, dismissals may be revoked, the results of whole examinations are in question. The programs of operating departments and civil service agencies are hampered by this procedure, yet there seems to be no solution to the problem.

One case in point will serve to illustrate how practice can be affected by judicial decision and what delays or shifts in appointment may result from reversed decisions.

The case of *Immediato v. Finegan*¹ arose from an examination given in September, 1937, by the Municipal Civil Service Commission of New York City for the position of assistant foreman in the Department of Sanitation. In one test item in this examination candidates were given three short essay problems and asked to answer only one of the three. A number of successful candidates either misunderstood the directions or had extra time on their hands and answered all three items. In scoring these papers the Commission decided to divide the possible score for the item as a whole into three equal parts, allotting a score value of $33\frac{1}{3}$ score points to each question and to penalize the total score for the item by 10 points for failure to follow directions. A candidate who had followed directions accurately brought suit on the grounds that he should not be scored below or on a par with those who had made a manifest error. He demanded that the entire item be marked as void for those who answered all three parts. The Supreme Court decided in favor of the plaintiff on the score that "it is better in the interest of civil service that rules and regulations be strictly complied with by all candidates than that the Commission be given discretionary powers to dispense with strict compliance under varying penalties. Such dispensation and discretionary penalties could readily develop into a custom as unfair to the principle of civil service as the spoils system." The Court of Appeals later reversed the decision of the Supreme Court and upheld the Commission's action, rendering no opinion. It may have considered either that the Commission's method of handling the situation in the case in point was acceptable, or that decisions on methods of scoring

¹ Decisions—Appellate Div.—Supreme Court, 1st Dept., in *New York Law Journal*, February 14, 1938, p. 749.

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and similar matters are within the discretionary power of the Commission and should not be interfered with by the courts.

The action affected the scores of several candidates and consequently the order of rank of the entire list. Any appointments made from the list had therefore to be provisional or temporary until the case had been passed upon by the Court of Appeals.

OTHER PROGRAMS FOR EMPLOYEES

A well-developed personnel program, whether in industry or in government service, will make provision for safety and health of employes, for supervision of working conditions, for recreation, and possibly for certain other activities such as group insurance or medical care,¹ credit unions,² or co-operative purchasing. Some of these activities may be part of the function of a centralized personnel agency, others that of personnel bureaus within operating departments; some of them are most successful when administered by employe groups. In this class, for example, come recreational programs and enterprises for the financial security, protection, and advantage of employes. Personnel bureaus often suggest such activities to employe groups or encourage and facilitate their adoption, but it is usually felt that, if they are to serve their intended purpose, they must represent employe effort and be under employe control.

Programs for safety and health and the supervision of working conditions fall, however, within the scope of personnel departments. Whether they originate and are carried out through a central agency or through departmental bureaus, is less important than that they be given due attention. Even if final responsibility for such programs is assigned by statute to central personnel agencies, actual administration is likely to be delegated to departmental control.

¹ See The Ross-Loos Clinic; A Pioneer Venture in Group Medical Service for Public Employes, by H. U. M. Higgins. Pamphlet no. 2. Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada, Chicago, March, 1936.

² See Credit Unions for Government Employees, by C. R. Orchard. Pamphlet no. 1. Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada, Chicago, January, 1936.

CHAPTER XVI

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE: A SUGGESTED FUNCTION FOR CIVIL SERVICE AGENCIES

ONE function which has not generally been demanded of civil service agencies, nor assigned to them by law, and which they have not assumed, except as incidental to other personnel work, would seem worth consideration as a distinct civil service activity. That is the function of vocational guidance.¹

Vocational choices are continually being placed before candidates for public positions or those who are already employed in government service. The candidate or employe, in government as in business, needs a long-range view of where a particular vocational decision may lead him. He needs informed advice on where his particular abilities may fit into the complicated picture of government, or where his ambitions are most likely to be realized in terms both of those abilities and of the probable development of vocational opportunity. The civil service agency, with its comprehensive view of government as a whole and its intimate knowledge of departments, class-specifications, recruiting and promotional policies, and with its constant opportunity to check success and failure on the job in relation to types of personality and background, would seem the logical source from which such guidance should come.

Provision of vocational guidance service in civil service agencies would not be a philanthropic enterprise. A skilful guidance service should yield dividends to government in the way of directing original competitive effort, salvaging otherwise waste material, directing ambition into line for progress, correcting vocational mistakes, and, by no means least in potential value, interpreting the

¹ While civil service agencies as such have not assumed this function, some personnel officers in federal departments have carried on a useful program of vocational guidance and placement, particularly in relation to those laid off in periods of contraction.

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civil service program to the public. Administration of a merit system is complicated. Methods used are often misunderstood by the general public. The candidate who fails is disposed to be suspicious and in self-justification may be articulate about his suspicions. If he could be led to an understanding of what-happened-and-why, community acceptance of the merit program would be promoted.

The candidate who is choosing among several advertised civil service examinations needs vocational guidance. One who has passed his examinations and has several appointments open to him needs help in selecting from among them. This is particularly true in the case of general examinations from which appointments may be made to many departments and many positions. One can imagine that ranking eligibles on such a register may well be dazzled by the variety of vocational choice offered them and may need skilful and seasoned advice in coming to sound decisions. The candidate of superior ability who fails of appointment although he ranks well on a list from which only one or two appointments are to be made, needs to be encouraged to try again before his interest wanes. The candidate who receives a low score may be led to understand his failure, or helped—when such a course is indicated—to improve his chances on a second attempt. The individual who fails during the probationary period may be helped by analysis of causes and given another opportunity. Transfers, promotions, choice of training plans and facilities, all offer similar opportunities for the exercise of vocational guidance. Examination and induction of government employes is an expensive process. It produces valuable concrete evidence of aptitudes. Much of the investment represented and the evidence obtained must be lost by the wayside without some definite provision for conserving human resources such as that supplied by a vocational service.

Following the series of oral examinations conducted in Pennsylvania by the Employment Board for the Department of Public Assistance,¹

¹ See p. 156.

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the 756 oral board members were asked to comment on the oral examinations. In addition to criticisms of the program, there were informal comments. Several members stated that they had been "impressed with the excellent human material uncovered by the written examinations and distressed that so much of it for one reason or another did not seem to fit into the particular jobs to be filled." In line with this, a number of suggestions were offered as to ways of conserving the best material for the Department of Public Assistance.

It was proposed "that, following each large series of examinations, the Employment Board should conduct a vocational guidance program during the course of which a skilled interviewer should consult with each candidate who had passed the written examination but had failed to come out near the top on any eligible list. The interviewer would indicate to the candidate just what his capabilities and experience justified his expecting and what other positions in the department he might apply for."

Another suggestion for conserving good material for supervisory and administrative positions from among the totally inexperienced group was that "either the Employment Board or the Department of Public Assistance might make a few one-year or two-year provisional appointments of carefully selected able people with no experience in public welfare and grant scholarships at schools of social work to the incumbents during the probationary period."¹

Adding a specialist in vocational guidance to the staff of a civil service agency need not involve duplication of work of the United States Employment Service nor that of any other government body. The work of such a specialist would be supplementary to that of other government personnel departments. Providing vocational guidance service within the civil service agency would help to clarify the particular vocational issues raised by its system of selection and appointment and serve in part to relate opportunity within the civil service to opportunity outside.

¹ From an unpublished report by a staff member, made to the Employment Board for the Pennsylvania Department of Public Assistance, under the title Oral Examining Boards for Civil Service Examinations Held in the First Three Months of 1938.

PART TWO

WHERE SOCIAL WORK AND
MERIT SYSTEMS MEET

CHAPTER XVII

WORKING FOR INAUGURATION, EXTENSION, OR PROTECTION OF MERIT SYSTEMS

THE first part of this book has discussed the general development of civil service organizations in this country and has given a summary description of civil service functions and methods as they may affect the personnel in any branch of government. Social workers and supporters of social work are interested to know more specifically how all this relates to their profession, especially as to the selection of public welfare employes in the present rapidly expanding and changing public welfare programs.

Part Two of the study discusses some of the issues raised and the techniques required when civil service rules and methods are applied to the public welfare field. It considers primarily how the social worker can best further the cause of sound personnel administration through the operation of merit systems.

In what definite ways can the social worker help to promote such a program?

1. The social worker may take part in a movement for the establishment or extension of the merit principle in selection of personnel; or he may be concerned with the protection of a previously established merit system.
2. The social worker may be allied with a labor union or some other special group whose interests overlap both those of social work and civil service at certain points only. He may need to clarify his own point of view or that of others in relation to several objectives which are in part the same and in part in conflict.
3. His interest may be more narrowly focused on the specific effect of the merit system on social work positions.

The first of these focal points of the social worker's interest in

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merit systems is discussed in this chapter, the other two in the chapters next following.

No specific suggestions are here made on details of drafting civil service laws¹ because this is a technical subject on which there are organizations and experts more competent to speak. There are, however, three underlying general considerations to be borne in mind in inaugurating, extending, or protecting a merit system.

NEED FOR CO-OPERATIVE ACTION

First is the fact that concerted action is more effective than individual action. There are powerful groups in each commission's jurisdiction who share many of the social worker's objectives for civil service although they may also have others which are supplementary and special. It has been noted that labor unions, both craft and industrial, have been interested in extension of civil service coverage chiefly because of their conviction that the adoption of a merit system tends to secure tenure and improve standards of personnel procedure. Such civic and political organizations as municipal leagues, leagues of women voters, business and professional clubs, and citizens' unions are interested in furthering civil service objectives as a step in good government. Other professional groups, as physicians, nurses, or engineers, welcome protection of civil service regulations for members of their profession employed in public service. If social workers neglect to align themselves actively with these and similarly interested bodies in working for new civil service legislation, in promoting the inauguration of departmental merit systems, even where no mandatory or permissive legislation exists, or in acting as watchdog for those systems already in operation, their effectiveness is likely to be needlessly weakened.

While civil service problems are comparatively new to social workers, they lie in a field where many battles have been won and lost by others whose experience is available and of value. A number of organizations hold the crusader's point of view toward im-

¹ See pp. 77-81, 227.

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provement of civil service administration. Their assistance can be enlisted in setting up a new civil service agency or in working to correct mistakes in existing systems. The Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada¹ is primarily an organization of civil service commissions and officials. It carries on a program of research, promotion, and consultation. The National Civil Service Reform League,² and its constituent state, county, and municipal civil service reform associations, reflect militant public interest in civil service extension and reform. The two organizations just referred to have both drafted model laws which represent what they believe should be the general pattern of civil service legislation. These models can be adapted to meet varying local needs.

Many other national, state, and local organizations, as well as many individuals, are concerned with problems of civil service administration as part of a larger program of government or personnel administration. The American Public Welfare Association,³ the Public Administration Service,⁴ and the Public Administration Clearing House⁵ are interested and experienced in civil service matters as an important phase of public administration. State and local personnel associations are interested in examination techniques and in other personnel functions that have to do with maintaining employe efficiency. The Social Security Board⁶ and the Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor are rapidly assembling significant data on civil service practices in the several states. The United States Civil Service Commission, Division of Information, is similarly active with reference to federal practices. Staff members of schools of public administration and of university departments of political science, government, psychology, or education have in the past been called upon as specialists,

¹ G. Lyle Belsley, director. 1313 East 60th St., Chicago, Illinois.

² H. Eliot Kaplan, executive secretary. 521 5th Ave., New York.

³ Fred K. Hoehler, director. 1313 East 60th St., Chicago.

⁴ Donald A. Stone, executive director. 1313 East 60th St., Chicago. Branch offices in Berkeley, California, and in Boston, Massachusetts.

⁵ Louis Brownlow, director. 1313 East 60th St., Chicago.

⁶ The Standards, published by the Social Security Board, states that a technical consultative service will be available to the states.

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and their experience is likewise a rich source of guidance. To attempt to set up new legislation or improve the status of existing merit systems without drawing on such funded experience would seem wasteful.

ADVANTAGE OF ADMINISTRATIVE FLEXIBILITY

The second consideration for those interested in civil service legislation is that, as previously indicated, experience suggests that laws governing merit plans should be specific on some points and conveniently broad on others. In general, the most effective civil service legislation seems to be that which establishes principles clearly, but leaves the specific application to be worked out as situations develop. For example, the principle of keeping separate the functions of commission and staff, or of advisory committee and executive, can be stated without listing in detail the duties of either. The principle of selecting the executive on a merit basis can be so worded that the detail of method is left to the commission. The law can indicate the legislature's intent and philosophy about relationships of central personnel agency and operating department without complicating a difficult situation by imposing predetermined regulations. The scope of the civil service agency's program can be indicated without saddling it with definite functions which, for a variety of reasons including lack of funds and qualified personnel, it may not be equipped or ready to undertake. The desirability of classification and compensation systems may be indicated, or the establishment of such plans may be made mandatory without specifying in the law what the major classifications or salary grades should be. Examinations may be made mandatory but the degree of competitiveness, type of examinations, qualifications, method of scoring and method of appointment from eligible lists may be left to commission and executive, if the principles involved are made clear, and provided that members of the commission and the executive are well qualified. Unless they are, regardless of what the law specifies, the experiment is not likely to be successful.

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In other words, legislation that is clear and unequivocal as to intent may safely be only permissive or enabling in matters of detail. The civil service agency and departments concerned will thus be given, at one and the same time, clear authority and opportunity for flexibility in planning programs. If this principle holds true in the general area of civil service administration, it must certainly apply where the field involved is in process of rapid development, as in the case of social work under public auspices. The danger to be avoided in such instances is that forms and procedures become crystallized so fast that the values of a period of experimentation are lost.

THE QUESTION OF COMPROMISE

The third consideration to be kept in mind in promoting civil service legislation is that legislative bills always represent a multiplicity of interests and may not therefore completely satisfy any of their sponsors. To decide when half a loaf is better than none is a nice problem, and one which must be settled anew in each situation. Is a bill which, in general theory, establishes the merit principle, but actually controverts it by blanketing-in incumbents or by prohibiting entrance requirements, a bill worth having, or is it a bill to be blocked? What stand shall social workers take when an otherwise desirable bill incorporates provision for an unreasonable degree of veteran preference? When a law is proposed which establishes a classification or a salary system excluding social workers from professional status, or setting salaries far below existing levels in public welfare or in other professions, ought social workers to campaign for that law because they know the state needs classification and compensation schemes, or should they try to kill it because it will work hardship on members of the social work profession and on those whom they serve? Zeal for good government or for high standards may blind the representative of a professional group to the advantages of an occasional admixture of opportunism with idealism in following professional objectives. So-

cial workers as public employes can exist only through legislative sanction, and only through legislative sanction can their clients be served. Legislators are by nature opportunists, or rather, agents of compromise, otherwise no laws could be passed. The social work attitude, like that of any other specialized group, must occasionally seem alien and unrealistic to the politician, who would sponsor nine-tenths of social work causes if the social worker would yield on the residual one-tenth.

SECURING GOOD APPOINTMENTS TO CIVIL SERVICE BODIES

When a new civil service agency is to be set up under suitable legislation, the appointment of a commission becomes of special interest to the social worker and to all others concerned for the probity and efficiency of the merit system. Thus, when either new appointments are to be made or changes are impending, social workers have opportunity to bring qualified candidates to the attention of the appointing authority, for one of the best ways of protecting a system, as well as establishing it firmly, is to see that its personnel is good. This applies to appointment of commissioners, whether honorary or salaried, and also to staff. It has been said that the action of social workers will be more effective if they can agree with other community groups on a common candidate and if their interest in civil service problems can be continuing rather than intermittent. The fact that other civic groups have once evinced interest in civil service reform is no proof that they will always watch for opportunities to influence appointments. Certainly, therefore, one of the first and most useful functions of local civil service committees of professional social work associations might be to learn what is the term of office of each commissioner; what considerations are likely to weigh heavily in future appointments; and then to confer in good season with other interested civic and professional groups in order to have a joint recommendation ready for presentation at the appropriate moment. This function will become increasingly important with the extension of civil service un-

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der the auspices of the Social Security Board and the Children's Bureau. In states without legally constituted merit agencies the appointment of the "Merit System Councils" will become of interest to all who are concerned with the promotion of a sound merit system.

Political wisdom may be necessary in order to arrive at an acceptable suggestion. It may of course be that politics will not enter, even in a negative way, into appointment of a commissioner or executive. On the other hand, the law itself in many jurisdictions specifies that political affiliations of appointees be considered through provisions that commissions must be bi-partisan. Where there is no legal compulsion it may nevertheless be common knowledge that only members of a given party stand a chance for appointment to commission or staff. It will be expedient to ascertain in advance what situation prevails in order to forestall the useless gesture of backing a politically unacceptable candidate. There are honest and competent men in all political parties. Moreover, since a civil service agency lives, as it were, in a goldfish bowl, and is always exposed to criticism, and since its critics always have political affiliations, it may sometimes be desirable to have a spokesman within the commission whose words will at least be given a hearing by inner circles of the dominant party.

The Civil Service Committee of the local chapter of the American Association of Social Workers in one large city recently learned that a rather elderly commissioner's reappointment to the State Civil Service Commission would soon be up for consideration. A little research disclosed that appointment to that post had been traditionally made from a given political party and that the candidate had always come from a given city. The committee consulted two important civic groups in that city, both of whom were unaware that a reappointment was pending although such knowledge on the part of either might have been assumed. Each of the groups concerned is now preparing lists of possible candidates, some agreement will be reached on joint nominations, and recommendations will be made to the governor in ample time for his consideration. The social work group in this instance took the initiative but withdrew from the limelight.

CIVIL SERVICE IN PUBLIC WELFARE

In seeking acceptable candidates for civil service commissions and administrators, the search should not be made primarily within the field of social work. Although social workers along with other professional and civic-minded people might make excellent candidates, it seems to the writer at least, that some elements in their professional philosophy might militate against their success in this capacity. Social workers have been trained to concentrate their efforts on individual and group problems; the give-and-take of politics is, generally speaking, alien to them. Their approach to the specialized field of personnel management is that of intelligent practitioners of another profession. Determining the philosophy of civil service agencies and integrating their program with all branches of government is a task for statesmanship and politics in the broadest sense. Administering a civil service program, on the other hand, whether for diverse government services or for public welfare alone, is definitely a personnel job. To promote the appointment of public spirited and intelligent citizens as commissioners, without much regard for fields of experience, and to encourage staff appointments from among those qualified specialists in personnel administration who have respect for the objectives of special fields, will result in a combination that can be trusted to forward the best objectives of any of the professions involved, including social work. If, furthermore, social workers can secure the appointment of a qualified member of their profession to the civil service staff, as an expert on those points where social work knowledge is necessary, they will have achieved important additional protection for the practice of public welfare under the merit system. This last step, however, is probably beyond the realm of possibility except in agencies with ample appropriations and large staffs.

PROTECTING PUBLIC WELFARE POSITIONS AGAINST ENCROACHMENTS

Earlier in this book the point was made that because appointment by merit will inevitably defeat the ambitions of many per-

sons, constant vigilance is needed to see that a merit system, once established, actually achieves its purpose. Where raids or special limitations on civil service systems affect public welfare positions, social workers have a few special considerations to bear in mind.

Residence Restrictions and Public Welfare. Residence restrictions have been previously discussed¹ as a hindrance to free application of the merit principle. They present a particularly perplexing problem to public welfare departments on account of the current shortage of trained workers. The supply of trained staff for positions in such special fields as child welfare and medical social work is even more out of balance with demand than is the supply of persons with generalized social work training. Social workers up to now have had limited opportunity to secure training or experience in administration, yet there is great demand for experienced county administrators with professional training. Requiring local residence for individuals in any of these groups hampers appointing officers in recruitment. Residence restrictions work particular hardship in recruiting for public welfare positions in states that have no schools of social work and few social agencies of high standards. They are equally hampering in sparsely settled states to which the few native social workers may not want to return on account of lack of opportunity for professional association and advancement. County residence restrictions for county positions have an even more serious effect. Not only may counties have in their population no qualified social work personnel, but such restrictions prevent qualified workers from progressing from smaller to larger counties as their capabilities develop. It is particularly important to preserve this form of opportunity for progression from small job to larger in the career of administrators, where capacity to handle volume is a prime requisite.

Few state departments of public welfare have consistently gone outside their states for personnel and the path of those that have done so has been beset with difficulties. Local people are likely to

¹ See pp. 69-72, 108-109.

feel that the decisions of public welfare officials may affect such community issues as labor relations, wage rates, real estate values, and racial and religious feeling. Therefore it has seemed particularly important to many communities to have local appointees in public welfare departments. Some states and communities in which no general state law requires the appointment of residents to other public posts, nevertheless have such special provision governing public welfare appointments. In others, local pressures for local appointment have had the force of law.

Nevada has no state law or published regulation prescribing residence qualifications for appointment to positions in the State Department of Public Welfare; yet applicants are required to note on their application blanks whether they have lived in the state for five years, and are not appointed if their residence has been less than that.

Residence requirements established by law or by announced regulation in the public welfare departments of the several states vary from three months' domicile to ten years as a local taxpayer.

While no rigid classification can be made, in about half of the 48 states either the law or the rules of the civil service agency specify, with certain exceptions, that appointees must have been residents for varying periods immediately prior to appointment. These exceptions are concerned chiefly with positions requiring technical or other special skills. Regulations in Missouri and Texas are the most restrictive. In Missouri the Administrator of the State Social Security Commission must have been a citizen and taxpayer of the state for ten years; county secretaries must have been residents of the particular county in which they are employed. The Director of the Old Age Assistance Commission in Texas must have been a resident of the state for ten years; other employes for four years. In North Dakota the Director of the Public Welfare Board must have been a resident of the state for five years prior to appointment, but no residence restriction is specified for other appointees.

Illinois and Iowa have respectively three and two years' state and county residence requirements. Connecticut and Rhode Island come next, with a two years' state residence requirement which may be waived if no state resident proves qualified. New York is one of many

states having a one year's state residence provision. Pennsylvania adds to the requirement for one year's residence, a six months' county residence for county positions.

In all but two or three of the states which have no requirements fixed by law or by the rules and regulations, appointments are in fact limited to residents of the state and sometimes also to residents of the county concerned, as a matter of public policy. In New England and in parts of the South, preference seems to be along regional rather than state lines. Those states which have managed thus far to make extra-state appointments without arousing extreme local resentment seem to have achieved their results by observing two precautions. They canvass local resources thoroughly before appointing outsiders; and they appoint them only to positions for which special training is clearly needed.¹

Since legally prescribed or rigidly enforced residence restrictions carry a particular threat to quality of performance in public welfare departments, the problem of avoiding most legal restrictions and of securing liberal interpretation of such restrictions as are dictated by public policy would seem to be one on which social workers can present a united front. To the politician the case for residence requirements seems clear; therefore the brief for the other side will have to show valid reasons why residence requirements are undesirable.

The Nebraska Chapter of the American Association of Social Workers, in an effort to set the public mind at rest as to certain provisions of the civil service bill pending in 1939, recently made a careful statement as to the number of social workers employed in the state department who are not natives of Nebraska. This group of social workers numbers 19 and represents only 10 per cent of the total number employed by the state department. On the other hand, a quick survey revealed the fact that at least 81 native Nebraskans have secured employment in social work in other states of the union—many of them in important positions. Until very recently Nebraska's opportunities for social work training have been so restricted that it would have been impossible for natives of the state to have received training on home ground, or con-

¹ Data taken from *The Merit Principle in Selection of Public Welfare Personnel* (see footnote one, p. 50) and from information given by the Civil Service Reform Association.

versely, for the state to have secured Nebraska-trained graduates in social work for its 651 public assistance jobs. The chapter's study showed, by way of sidelight, that of Nebraska's 43 legislators, two were foreign born, twelve were born elsewhere in the United States, and as to nine others no information was available. Thus at least 32 per cent of the law-making body are persons not of Nebraska origin.¹

Whether it is wise, however, to urge any state department of public welfare to put itself alone in the somewhat vulnerable position of announcing that it has no residence restrictions is an open question. It has been suggested² that state residence limitations can be adequately handled only on an interstate basis. If this is true in general, it is the more so in relation to public welfare departments in which the shortage of trained workers introduces active competition for staff. The state department of public welfare which stands alone in recruiting from other states will find itself constantly being robbed of those whom it has trained.

Exemptions and Public Welfare. The problem of the continuous attempts to have positions exempted from the classified service has already received general consideration.³ Sometimes these exemptions are made as a result of pressures outside the agency, and have little relation to departmental efficiency. Sometimes, however, the request for exemption comes from within the operating department, from the governing board, or from the profession represented in the position in question—all of whom have the interests of the program exclusively in mind. In such cases as those last mentioned, immediate advantage has to be balanced against ultimate costs. The temptation to ask for exemptions is strong in public welfare departments at this stage of their development. Rapid growth, shortage of trained personnel, changing policies, the experimental nature of the whole public welfare program, all constitute arguments for giving an administrator a free hand in appointing to strategic positions. Counter-arguments are the inse-

¹ The Compass, vol. 20, no. 8, May, 1939, pp. 3-5.

² See p. 72.

³ See pp. 57-60.

curity of such appointments, the damage they do to community acceptance of the merit principle, and the danger of initiating or strengthening a precedent of inroads upon the competitive system of appointment. Social workers, whether themselves serving in the capacity of appointing officers in public welfare departments, or as members of committees considering methods of appointment to such positions, have to strike a balance between the ultimate advantages and disadvantages of "cutting red tape" in such appointments by securing exemptions for these positions from the classified list.

SUGGESTED CAUTIONS AND PROCEDURES

When announcements of examinations, appointments, or proposed administrative procedures seem to indicate that the civil service agency is neglecting its true function, or that some group is successfully circumventing its efforts, some protest may be deemed advisable. In such situations those concerned will probably wish to consult the civil service agency before dashing into print or using other aggressive tactics—as a matter of courtesy, as well as self-protection, and to conserve working relationships. The civil service agency may be suffering under pressures from one source or another and welcome public comment from an untrammelled source. On the other hand, its explanation of a particular course of action may change the attitude or methods of its critics. Its board or staff deserves the courtesy of being heard and might justly resent being ignored. Also it is to be recalled that commendation of good practice is often more effective in improving a situation than criticism of poor practice. Some civil service commissions and legislatures have developed what amounts to immunity against criticism from constant exposure to it! Congratulations on a wise appointment, commendation on a firm stand, recognition of a good set of examinations may provide needed encouragement and support to the commission, and also pave the way for acceptance of criticism when this seems called for.

In working for appointment of qualified personnel or against any threatened attack on the work of civil service agencies, social workers have a source of potential strength in the board members and advisory groups of their own agencies. These are usually composed of well-known persons who wield power of one kind or another in their own communities or over a larger area. In some circumstances suggestions or protests from boards of social agencies or a barrage of protests from their members as individuals may be more effective than any statement from the social workers themselves or from their professional associations. The social worker, like the prophet of old, is not always honored in his own country. By stimulating others to take public leadership in such matters instead of assuming it themselves, social workers may often better promote the interests of the cause they have at heart.

Protecting a merit system requires eternal vigilance. Raids upon it come from unexpected sources and in diverse forms. Many of them have strong political backing.

Perhaps the three qualities most needed by social workers, or others, when protecting the civil service from such raids, are a combination of understanding of the traditional nature and reasonableness to the elected official of his own point of view; courage and skill in presenting an opposing opinion; and wisdom in determining the points on which no ground is to be given. As for the public welfare appointee within a merit system who never concedes, he is probably due for early demise as an official. With his downfall may come the downfall of his program. To choose where to concede and where to stand firm in relation to methods of personnel selection, appointment, and management will tax his skill as an administrator and as a social worker. His success in this respect may be the chief measure of his success in his job as a whole. The merit system is there to help him achieve this success, not to hinder it.

CHAPTER XVIII

RECONCILING SOCIAL WORK OBJECTIVES UNDER CIVIL SERVICE WITH OTHER IM- PORTANT OBJECTIVES

DIVERGENT interests and objectives may put the social worker in a dilemma when social work and merit systems meet. The objectives of both may be laudable but at points they come into conflict. When the social worker is affiliated with some other group such as a labor union, whose interests overlap those of social work and of civil service only at certain points, his confusion is increased.

Consciousness of this conflict of objectives and perhaps opportunity to solve them for himself or others may come to the social worker as an individual technician or as a member of chapters or committees of the several social work associations, associations of public employes whose status is involved, affiliated labor groups, or civic associations. As a delegate for his own profession, he may act in concert with delegates of other professional groups. In any of these roles he has many adjustments to make. Besides informing himself as to what civil service programs or procedures will best advance the practice of public social work, he has to reconcile his professional objective with the objectives of the agency administering the merit system and also with those of any other special group with whose interests he is identified. The social worker who has already sought to understand the interrelationships of social work and civil service at the points where they unite, and who has accommodated his professional philosophy to changes which civil service has made in the contemporary scene, will still have many actual adjustments to make in accepting the day-by-day conditions imposed by a merit system.

ADJUSTMENT TO CONDITIONS IMPOSED BY GOVERNMENT
EMPLOYMENT

It has already been made plain in the course of this study that the transfer of relief giving, and of the case-work services that are part of it, from private to public auspices, cannot be accomplished without realigning the objectives of the profession of social work and the function and status of the social worker.

Social work is now a major function of government. Few social workers regret this fact or regard the situation as temporary. As the social worker becomes a government servant he has, however, to adjust himself to certain restrictions hitherto unknown to him. Some of these are for the purpose of freeing the whole group of government employes from other restrictions which would be more hampering in the end. The merit system of selection, promotion, and dismissal is itself one such restriction. The social worker who welcomed the transfer of relief giving from private to public auspices will eventually adjust himself to the inconveniences of a civil service system. He will realize that while civil service examinations are not perfect, they are the best system devised to date for selecting government personnel. His zeal for government service will make him accept the inherent difficulties.

On the other hand, the social worker who is "trying public welfare until something else comes up," or who regards the present situation as a temporary result of bad times, to be corrected when private agencies are again in funds, will have continued and perhaps increasing difficulty in adjusting to the demands of public welfare and in particular to the merit system. He will be slow to identify himself with the large army of government servants, and may resent being affected by a system which makes few exceptions. Unless he can adjust to the system, since it will not adjust to him, his future does not look bright.

It is not intended to imply that the task of adjusting oneself or one's department to operating under a civil service system is easy. Inconveniences will be real; crises of considerable though tempo-

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rary severity may result from the installation of a civil service system.

The social worker who is an administrator will be worried by the prospect of such upheaval. He will be annoyed by the difficulty of securing, through examinations, personnel which precisely matches his specifications for even a single position; or by the necessity for "preparing a case" before he can dismiss the staff member whose work falls below par. He will be inconvenienced by what may seem the red tape involved in working with a centralized and technically staffed personnel system.

The social worker who is a staff member has similar problems. He will fear the uncertainty about staff relationships that may precede a wholesale civil service examination, even though he may not fear failure for himself. He may resent the fact that he cannot be promoted without further examinations. He will not relish being put in competition with outsiders for the job which he feels he has long filled with competence. He may be critical of an examination planned by people who lack his intimate knowledge of his duties.

The social worker from the private agency, who is seeking employment in a public department, may resent restriction upon competition by outsiders for the sake of providing "career" opportunity for present staff.

Any regulatory system is easier to accept in theory than in practice. The administrator can be enthusiastic about a system which controls influence in appointments and provides continuation of opportunity and security for employes, up to the point where it interferes with his traditional prerogatives. For the staff worker, it is easy to advocate free competition until it threatens proprietary rights over a job. The "career" idea is appealing to those whose career has begun; not so appealing to those whose opportunity to begin a career is thereby limited.

Genuine and sustained enthusiasm for civil service demands from social workers considerable far-sightedness, devotion to gov-

ernment, and concentration on the ultimate interests of the client group when civil service regulations come in conflict with immediate professional objectives or personal interests. Social work has lately been thrown wholesale into civil service systems. What is needed is a constant balancing of values between exigencies of the moment and the demands of long-time planning. Perhaps the higher he is on the employment scale, the easier it is for the social worker to keep the balance even. And presumably the longer merit systems affect public welfare positions and the two fields have the benefit of mutual analysis and adaptation, the fewer and less important will be these conflicts.

ADJUSTMENT OF PROFESSIONAL AND LABOR UNION CONCEPTS

As a thinking individual and as an employe, the social worker will be interested in the problems and objectives of organized labor and, to some extent, he is identified with all employes whether he is in a private agency or in a public department. Social work employes in government service have been far longer and better organized than those in private social work agencies. As more social work functions are absorbed into government, the question of whether to give support to the extension of the union movement to professional services, either theoretically or through joining a labor organization, becomes a clearer cut issue for the social worker.¹ As employment in public welfare comes increasingly to

¹ Employes of social agencies who are union members are chiefly distributed among locals of three organizations and are largely concentrated in a score of cities. Two of these organizations, the State, County and Municipal Workers of America (SCMWA) and the United Office and Professional Workers of America (UOPWA), are Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) affiliates. The first is an organization of 35,000 public employes of whom about 8,500 are employed in public welfare agencies. The second is an organization of 45,000 office and professional workers in non-governmental organizations of whom 2,000 are employed in private social agencies. The generic title of the seven locals to which the latter group belongs is Social Service Employees' Union. The third organization, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees of America (AFSCMEA), is an American Federation of Labor (A.F. of L.) affiliate of 27,000 members of whom 1,000 are public welfare employes. Thus about 17 per cent of unionized personnel in social work agencies are employed in private agencies, and about 83 per cent are employed in public depart-

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mean employment under a civil service system, the social worker may have to reconcile his professional objectives with his objectives as a supporter of organized labor at the point where these conflict in relation to some specific application of the merit system. The fact that organized labor itself is divided on important organizational and theoretical issues will tend to complicate this reconciliation.

Labor organization and the merit system may both seem basically desirable to social workers. It was noted earlier in this book,¹ however, that the interest of labor unions in civil service administration may derive more from the control, than from the creative, aspects of the civil service movement. To recapitulate, labor's interest in civil service laws is rather because of their power to prevent exploitation, to restrict political appointments, and to secure tenure than because they facilitate seeking out superior personnel and weeding out the unfit. Once the merit system is established and its general standard-setting and protective features are assured, the influence of the labor union may, in fact, be thrown against that free application of the merit principle which others deem necessary to protect quality of performance.

The Social Work Year Book article for 1939 on Trade Unionism in Social Work² shows how much emphasis is placed by unions in public welfare departments on protection of all incumbents instead of on protection of only those incumbents who are qualified:

The major activity of the public welfare locals in the past year has been around the civil service issue. . . . Where states have been in the process of transferring to civil service . . . locals have demanded retention of the staff and qualifying rather than competitive examinations. . . . Although unsuccessful anywhere to have the present staff blan-

ments. No data are available on how many of these 11,500 unionized social agency employes are professional social workers, and how many are employed in other professional or non-professional capacities.—Data, as of summer of 1938, from Trade Unionism in Social Work by Jacob Fisher, *in* Social Work Year Book, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1939, pp. 437-440.

¹ See pp. 65-69.

² Article by Jacob Fisher, pp. 438-439.

keted in, the unions claim to have won a number of valuable concessions: additional credit for experience, waiver of educational and experiential qualifications for people on the job, and change from weighted oral to qualifying oral examination.

Historically, organized labor has won more for employes in terms of hours, wages, working conditions, and establishment of standards of personnel practice, than has the civil service movement. It has achieved its ends by concentrating on the protection of the worker. The best civil service programs of today emphasize quality of performance in addition to protection of workers. The forward-looking social worker wishes to help develop a program that will conserve the values of both movements as they affect public welfare administration.

There appears to be growing recognition that the government employe, including the public welfare worker, needs the protection of organized labor in addition to civil service protection. An Englishman, writing about employe organization in the British Civil Service says: "Experience has brought the Civil Servant of all departments to the understanding that those placed in authority over him employ in the main the same economic arguments as those of employers in other industries."¹ There is this difference, however, in the relation of civil servant and industrial worker to their respective employers. The real employer of the civil servant is the legislature, which has only a control delegated by voters. The civil servant, therefore, has no employer whose material interests can be directly affected by labor action except the general public—a vague concept of which he himself is part. Therefore, the pressures which are exerted by civil servants are less effective than the direct pressure of a group of industrial workers on their employer. The civil servant allies himself with the general labor movement not only on philosophical grounds, but because in so doing, he allies himself with potential strength which his own employe association is unable to give him.

¹ Bowen, J. W., *Trade Unionism in the Civil Service*, in *Public Administration*, London, October, 1937, p. 420.

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Both, then, because of the fundamental importance of the labor movement and because membership in labor unions may be a needed protection to him as a public employe, and to those of whom he is typical, the social worker will wish to weigh values carefully when a decision desirable from the point of view of public personnel management contravenes some long-fought tenet of organized labor.

Such conflicts are by no means hypothetical. The professional worker who believes enthusiastically in a broad program of public personnel administration under a merit system, will, if he is consistent, wish to see merit considered in promotions and dismissals as well as in selection; his labor sympathies, on the other hand, will lead him to favor tenure and seniority rights as the legitimate basis of promotions and separations. His zeal for the merit system and his professional concern with quality of service rendered make him approve of a system of service ratings; his labor convictions tell him that these are often used to the detriment of employes, as devices for "speeding up" or as bases for staff cuts. His concern with personnel administration and his conscience as a social worker lead him to see the necessity for position and organization analyses that will inevitably result in adjusting size of staff to the needs of the program, with attendant elimination of the least fit; his identification, real or philosophical, with labor unions makes him resist staff cuts even when these are indicated by such analyses. His professional concern for the needs and rights of the client may make him disapprove of unionization in public welfare because of the association of unionization with obstructionist tactics; his devotion to the cause of labor makes him argue either that the end justifies the means, or that this end—the protection of labor—can be attained without the use of such tactics. His professional habits and principles may make him resist the idea of joining forces with the organized client group in opposition to his employer, although he is willing to protest in favor of the client group; his identification with organized labor, on the other hand, makes him favor joint

action by professional workers and their clients in defense of their common interests.

There may ultimately prove to be no irreconcilable conflict here as labor leadership in the public welfare field becomes more broad-minded and expert; as unions of public welfare employes concern themselves more with matters affecting their development than with their protection;¹ and as professionalism gains more standing in union circles. In speaking of the same problem in the British civil service, J. W. Bowen says, ". . . there has developed a personality [in the organized civil service group], which while aiming at the utmost personal efficiency and regard for the interests of the State, nevertheless realises that individual articulation of a sense of grievance avails nothing, and that joint responsibility has to be shouldered, in combination with others, to secure attention to legitimate representations."²

The argument here is only that the social worker should analyze the reasons for the ambivalence just described. As he debates a question of conflict between civil service and professional objectives on the one hand and those of organized labor on the other, may he recognize the compromises he may be making and count ultimate costs.

Two further considerations present themselves in this connection. Jobs of rank-and-file workers are likely to be more frequently threatened by introduction of a merit system than are those of people in responsible administrative posts, not only because there are more of the former but also because competition for rank-and-file positions is broader, since requirements are less exacting. While recent displacement of persons in important welfare positions might challenge this observation, it must be remembered that

¹ As evidenced, for example, in the conference on in-service training called in Washington, January 14 and 15, 1939, by the United Federal Workers of America. See Proceedings of the Conference on In-Service Training in the Federal Government, Education Committee, District of Columbia Council United Federal Workers of America, Washington.

² Trade Unionism in the Civil Service, *in* Public Administration, London, October, 1937, p. 420.

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such instances are comparatively rare, while the upsets that occur among the rank-and-file are frequent and usually escape public attention. For these reasons the group favoring the labor point of view, when conflict occurs in relation to civil service procedures, will naturally include a heavy representation of rank-and-file social workers. The group of public or private social workers on whom civil service commissions are likely to call for expert advice will consist of people who have achieved some measure of recognition and who hold positions of heavy responsibility. These persons may, in the nature of things, identify themselves with the administrators of a merit system or of an operating department under a merit system. Here again self-appraisal is called for so that the influence of personal considerations may be recognized and discounted, and so that there may not develop on civil service issues two camps of feeling which are caste-like in character.

The social worker who belongs to a union will wish to keep a further caution in mind. For reasons already stated unions of public employes are usually stronger among clerical and other less specialized groups than among the professional staff; nevertheless, in order to strengthen their claim in a particular issue, unions will often use arguments that apply primarily to professional positions and are not particularly applicable to clerical groups. Without denying the identity of many interests of professional and clerical employes, or discounting in the least either the value of good clerical assistance or the difficulties involved in simultaneous shifts in clerical staff, it is apparent that a much more serious situation is created, as affecting both office administration and the welfare of clients, when a heavy turnover occurs among the case-work staff. Nevertheless, an employes' union may press for "blanketing-in" as an administrative emergency measure even when the examination is one for clerical personnel. It is obviously advantageous to the union under such conditions to stand upon the assumption that the problems are identical in relation to all classes of positions. In thus balancing the pros and cons of such an issue, no criticism is in-

tended of those who deliberately support the cause of organized workers, clerical or otherwise. It is merely suggested that the social worker who is a union member understand what he is supporting and why, so that he can defend his position on realistic and tenable grounds.

CHAPTER XIX

FACTORS AFFECTING SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE UNDER MERIT SYSTEMS

IN ADDITION to a general interest that merit systems shall be well organized, administered, and protected, social workers are directly concerned with the level on which merit systems place social work in the whole governmental picture. They are concerned with the importance accorded to social work because of the ultimate effect on the client for whom the program is planned; because of the professional standing of, and opportunity for, social workers employed, and because of the reaction of the social worker's position in public welfare on standards for the whole field of social work. These considerations bear varying degrees of importance to individual social workers.

ESTABLISHING CO-OPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH CIVIL SERVICE AGENCIES

Establishment of social work in its proper setting in relation to other government functions and to other professional services is greatly facilitated if the civil service agency understands the area of operation and the professional objectives and standards of social work, and has some familiarity with its basic techniques. For this reason one of the first tasks in point of time of a professional group which is interested in bettering the status of social work under a merit system, would seem to be the establishment of a co-operative relationship with the civil service agency, through which mutual understanding of overlapping problems might grow. A number of chapters and several state councils of the American Association of Social Workers, as well as the district organizations of the American Association of Medical Social Workers, have committees

on civil service. Unofficial local groups of members of the American Association of Psychiatric Social Workers are interested in civil service problems. Local unions of public welfare employes and unions of staff members of private agencies, each including social workers in their membership, are approaching the same question from a slightly different angle. Some of these committees and groups are in civil service jurisdictions, some are not. All of them are in territory in which a merit system for public welfare has been or may be established, either as part of a state program or as affecting a smaller area. These groups would seem to be a natural channel through which to develop a co-operative relationship.

Opportunity for active scrutiny and participation by social work organizations will, of course, be enhanced as the Social Security Board and the Children's Bureau develop their programs for supervising the application of state merit systems to public welfare.

In this connection, however, it must be recalled that a civil service agency cannot be expected to work exclusively with any one section of the social work profession, except perhaps in relation to a given examination affecting that section only. In organizing interest in civil service problems, the pattern which will be most effective for the social worker to follow will vary in accordance with local differences and local personnel. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Social workers in Los Angeles seem to have contrived to mobilize their professional resources as a whole in their effort to co-operate with the civil service commission.

A group of social workers undertook to study, with the Civil Service Commission of Los Angeles County, the results of a particular medical social work examination which had been severely criticized. This effort had two direct results: one, the appointment of a committee representing the American Association of Social Workers, the American Association of Medical Social Workers, and the American Association of Psychiatric Social Workers to work regularly with the County Civil Service Commission; and second, the appointment of a subcommittee on medical social work which has co-operated with the Commission in giving all

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or part of four examinations including grading the papers; giving the oral tests, in which background and personality both were evaluated; checking references; and studying results—all at the request and with the supervision of the Commission. Incidentally, the subcommittee recognized at the outset that it ought really to begin with classification and job content instead of with examinations. It decided to postpone that study until later in response to the plea of one member of the committee that "For once, let us, as social workers, do the thing that is asked of us." Both the Commission and the subcommittee testify enthusiastically to the success of the joint enterprise.¹

Not only has the pattern of organization varied between communities, but also the point of approach of the social work group to civil service matters.

In San Diego when a new commissioner was appointed, representatives of the American Association of Social Workers called upon him, lent him books and pamphlets on social work, and otherwise indicated their willingness to co-operate. The Commissioner apparently appreciated the gesture; shortly thereafter he requested the group which had approached him to submit qualifications for the position of county welfare official.²

Sometimes a local social work group has given strong and needed support to the civil service agency when the jurisdiction of the agency or some of its procedures were attacked through court action.

In Ohio the local social work group employed counsel to serve as "Friend of the Court" in a suit brought against the civil service commission by a candidate who did not meet the established experience requirements for a public welfare examination. The point at issue was the old question of the candidate's "right" to open competition as opposed to the principle of selective competition. Presentation of the

¹ Amsden, Clifford N., *A Cooperative Venture Between Civil Service and Medical Social Work*, and Rubinow, Leonora B., *A Cooperative Venture Between Civil Service and Social Work—the Story of the Professional Committee*, in *Bulletin of the American Association of Medical Social Workers*, vol. 11, no. 7, September, 1938, pp. 93-108.

² Data from the files of the American Association of Social Workers.

commission's case was facilitated not only by the co-operation of the local social workers but by the League of Women Voters as well. The suit was dismissed, which meant that entrance requirements were effective as announced.¹

In Maryland, in the transition from temporary to permanent public welfare auspices, the staff of the Maryland Board of State Aid and Charities, the Department of State Employment and Registration, and certain local social workers co-operated in a series of examinations that went further in establishing the principle of selection on merit than was called for by the Attorney General's ruling. The decision of the latter was that former employes could be "blanketed-in" to the new regime. The Commissioner of the Department of State Employment and Registration interpreted this to mean "blanketing-in" to the organization but not to any particular position. On this theory examinations were given for classification only. The staff social workers who might have been adversely affected by this ruling and their local social work associates apparently put enthusiasm for the merit principle ahead of personal considerations and supported the program as outlined by the Commissioner, although if so minded they might have had good grounds for appeal.²

In some communities the approach has been by protesting entrance requirements or selective procedures—perhaps not the best way of fostering a co-operative working relationship. However, in the rare situation presenting definite evidence of mismanagement, this may be the only useful method.

In other communities the social work group has begun by working on some definite request of the civil service agency and has progressed from that toward developing a general plan for co-operation.

This was the point of departure in the Los Angeles program previously mentioned, and also apparently in Baltimore where the chapter of the American Association of Social Workers has been delegated certain responsibilities by the Civil Service Commission.

¹ Ohio Civil Service Suit Dismissed. News item in the *Compass*, vol. 18, no. 4, January, 1937, p. 2.

² Miller, Pauline, *Bridging the Gap*, in the *Compass*, vol. 17, no. 4, December, 1935, pp. 7-8.

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In another city, where the social work group had formerly been obliged to adopt a somewhat tentative approach, a change in commission personnel was the signal for improved relationship. The Commission approached individual members of the Civil Service Committee of the local chapter of the American Association of Social Workers with the request that they recommend a social worker for temporary appointment to the Commission. Their recommendation was accepted and the choice was heartily approved by the Commission. This body subsequently asked the chapter's committee to make a critical analysis of an examination given formerly and about to be repeated. It also proffered a more important request: namely, that this committee of social workers attempt, through a study of appointments in the local public welfare department, to gather information as to what kind of candidates were passing or failing to pass the civil service examinations given for that department, and also what items in written tests were being successfully or unsuccessfully answered by the better-equipped candidates.

Such action on the part of the civil service agency itself, in proposing a joint enterprise, greatly smooths the path of co-operation.

This was the situation in the case of examinations given for personnel of the Hamilton County (Cincinnati) Department of Public Welfare in 1935. At the urgent request of local relief authorities, the State Civil Service Commission conducted examinations for public welfare personnel for the county department. The examiner in charge was entirely competent in the test field, but realized that his knowledge of public welfare was limited. The following is quoted from his report:

. . . It became immediately apparent to the examiner that the drawing of acceptable qualifications in the case work field was at the heart of the problem and that no program could succeed unless its foundation of qualifications was basically sound.

At this juncture the cooperation of all groups interested in the problem of social work was solicited, and the response was most gratifying. A first preliminary meeting was arranged. In order that all points of view might receive recognition, representatives at this meeting were present from all public relief and welfare agencies, from all private case working agencies, from the State Relief Commission, from social

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agencies in other cities in the state, from the staff of the Department of Public Welfare and the Personnel Committee of the American Association of Social Workers. The matter was discussed from all possible angles with the greatest freedom of expression. Backgrounded then with full notes, the examiner proceeded to formalize the qualifications. This done, copies were sent to all participants in the first meeting as well as to other leaders in the field of social work throughout the country for final comment. So thoroughly had all of the slightly varying points of view been presented and discussed, and so completely had minor conflicts been harmonized, that no changes except as to very minor details were suggested. Nor, in the time that elapsed up to the present, has it been necessary to make any changes.

. . . It was therefore the studied policy of the examiner to use all of these resources to the utmost, and let it be recorded that at no time was any request for counsel or aid either refused or delayed. Disagreements occurred, but completely frank and thorough discussions of points at issue invariably resulted in decisions which received unanimous approval and loyal support. Without this disinterested cooperation and aid, no Civil Service program, or any other program, can have any hope of success.¹

If the civil service agency does not ask social workers for assistance, surely the initiative should be taken by social workers as the benefits to be derived are mutual.

Whatever the method of organizing the social work group for co-operation with civil service agencies, or whatever the point of departure for their program of study or service, it is obvious that in developing a relationship between two such technical fields as social work and government personnel administration, frequent conferences are bound to increase mutual understanding.

It has perhaps been implied in the foregoing through use of the phrase "civil service agency" that the effort of social workers to promote better standards of personnel selection and management in public departments should always be made by co-operating with a civil service commission formally established by law. This is by

¹ Horchow, Reuben, Civil Service for Public Welfare in Hamilton County, Ohio. American Public Welfare Association, Chicago, n.d., pp. 5 and 10.

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no means the case. One has only to read Harrison Dobbs's article in the *Compass*¹ to realize that in many cases a voluntarily established merit system may offer more flexibility for experimentation than an examination procedure conducted by a legally authorized commission with established rules and traditions. This article describes three systems for selection of public welfare personnel voluntarily adopted under the jurisdiction of the local civil service commission by the Juvenile Court of Chicago, the Cook County Administration of the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission, and the Municipal Court of Chicago. Local social workers co-operated in setting up or working out all three systems.

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD SOCIAL WORK

Reasons for Public Indifference. Social workers are hampered in their efforts to safeguard the interests of their profession under a merit system by the general public's misconceptions about the nature and importance of social work. At least four elements can be recognized as contributory:

1. Social work is a new and rapidly developing profession even in the private field.
2. The beneficiaries of social work tend to be a group distinct from those who support it.
3. Except in California and Missouri, social work does not have the statewide registration or certification which is the mark of professional standing in the lay mind.
4. Many positions in public welfare are occupied by persons who could not be classified as professional social workers.

Regarding the first point, not only is social work an infant profession; it is a somewhat synthetic one. Its field of work overlaps those of medicine, public health, psychiatry, housing, recreation,

¹ Dobbs, Harrison Allen, Some Observations on the Application of a Voluntary Merit System for Selection of Public Welfare Personnel, *in* the *Compass*, vol. 17, no. 11, August, 1936, pp. 9-14.

employment, social insurance, public administration, and the courts. It draws from all of these and it gives to all. Many of its theories and skills, and much of its limited textbook material come from the disciplines underlying those fields of practice as well as from the more academic disciplines of sociology, economics, and psychology. It has few techniques which are exclusively its own. Social workers have been absorbed in practice; they are not as prolific writers, not as skilled lobbyists, not as experienced interpreters as are members of some of the older professions. For these reasons social work as an entity is less clear to the general public.

In the private practice of medicine, law, engineering, and other professions, most of the recipients of professional services pay for what they receive. In the practice of social work under private auspices, supporters and beneficiaries are two distinct groups. Those who support social work have only indirect opportunity to see the value of what they are purchasing for someone else. Beneficiaries, partly because they are not individually conspicuous, and partly because they have received gratuitous service, are not likely to be articulate about the services they receive. This results in a relatively slow increase in public recognition of the value of services rendered by social workers.

Not only is it difficult for the general public to gain a clear idea of social work as a profession; but also the very concept that providing public welfare services is one of the major functions of government is both new and unwelcome to the public mind. The taxpayer may recognize the necessity of providing for those in need, yet grudge the amount of tax money so absorbed. The business world resents the "New Deal," with which public relief in large volume is identified. Legislators who vote money for public welfare are often comparatively unfamiliar with social work in its new form, and with social workers. The average legislator has had ample opportunity in his personal life to see why the qualifications and salary of a stenographer, librarian, lawyer, engineer, architect, physician, or even a cook need to be related to training or acquired

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skill. Unless he has been on the board of a social agency or has himself been on relief, he will probably be slow to recognize the social worker's need for adequate compensation, the administrator's need for qualified personnel, and the client's need for skilled service. A large proportion of the public in recent years have themselves been uncomfortably near the relief line. It is possible that fear of inability to maintain personal independence and of having personal affairs discussed by others may lead many of the still self-supporting public to prefer that the granting of relief be an automatic affair. As financial insecurity makes them identify themselves with those on relief, the idea of coupling relief with skilled professional service becomes repugnant.

Another factor contributing to the slowness of the public in recognizing public social work as an entity is the confusion of its terminology. A job which is almost identical from state to state and community to community may be called by many different names. Sometimes the title of a job bears a social work stamp; sometimes it is one used in a dozen different and unrelated occupations, as in the case of the term "investigator."

In Civil Service Procedures for Social Work Positions,¹ 548 separate current and approved titles were found describing social work positions in examination announcements of 43 civil service agencies. Of these, 435 titles were for positions in public assistance agencies. In all, 234 titles are given for positions in the state welfare departments covered. The "worker" classification (as contrasted in the study with administrator, supervisor, and technician) shows greatest lack of uniformity: 116 different titles were found for this group of positions. Eighty-three of these "worker" titles were used in only one jurisdiction each. The terms "social worker" and "visitor" were most often found, yet even these were used only 10 times each.

In A Public Welfare Job Study,² which reports an analysis of public welfare positions in selected state and county agencies, much the same situation with reference to titles is found. The authors ask careful con-

¹ Booth, Florence, American Public Welfare Association, Chicago, 1939, pp. 7-17.

² American Public Welfare Association, Chicago, June, 1938, p. 24.

sideration of certain proposed titles as a contribution toward bringing order out of chaos.

To use the same name for at least the same position of a distinctly professional character would be a simple means of encouraging public understanding of social work.

Formal Ways of Promoting Public Recognition. Public acceptance of social work as a profession would undoubtedly be facilitated also by the use of distinctive degrees for those who have completed graduate curricula in social work; and to a greater extent by a system of compulsory state registration or certification which would show state endorsement of recognized qualifications. Janitors and practical nurses are often called engineers and nurses, but there is no doubt in the public mind what the letters C.E. and R.N. mean by way of qualifications.

The terms certification, registration, and licensing, as referring to various forms of guarantee of occupational status, are often confused. For this reason some differentiation is here attempted.

"Certification" is a general term implying someone's guarantee that the person "certified" has met certain requirements. Certification may or may not involve the right to use a title or degree; it may be either voluntary or established by law. The American Association of Social Workers "certifies" that all its members admitted since a given date have certain minimum qualifications of professional training and experience although no title is involved. Colleges, universities, and professional schools "certify" that their graduates have met certain academic and sometimes practical requirements and are therefore entitled to use a given degree.

Beyond this the state has two ways of assuring a degree of competence in relation to occupations which affect public safety and security. It may require state "registration" or "licensing" and sometimes both. For example, certified public accountants and registered nurses in most states are "registered," or legally certified. This means that the state guarantees that the "registered" individual has passed a state examination qualifying him or her to use the title C.P.A. or R.N. In most states, failure to pass the examination does not restrict the individual from practicing so long as he does not use the state-protected title.

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"Licensing" is the state's restriction on the right to practice or operate. Physicians, "morticians," "beauticians," food dispensers, all must have licenses in certain states. They are liable to prosecution if they practice "for hire" without them, regardless of their qualifications. "Licensing," like registration, usually involves some form of examination.

Sometimes the state requires both registration and licensing, as it will in the case of registered nurses in New York State after July 1, 1940. At that time, state registration of graduate nurses will still obtain, and only those who have passed the state examination may use the title R.N.; but in addition, "all those who nurse the sick for hire" must be licensed. This is, of course, an attempt to raise the standards of what has been generally called "practical nursing."

Social workers who are interested in some form of publicly recognizable stamp of approval for the trained social worker usually have in mind either establishment by graduate schools of a distinctive social work degree; or some form of professionally controlled, statewide and voluntary certification; or state registration (or legalized certification) as enjoyed by certified public accountants in most states. Licensing, or control of the right to practice, may be something on the far distant horizon of social work, but is probably not practical at present for reasons of "imbalance" of supply and demand.

California and Missouri both have a system, similar in general outline, of voluntary certification of social workers.

The Missouri plan of certification was modeled after the California plan, with some change. Each is voluntary and operated by a Department of Registration and Certification of the State Conference. Social workers certified under either plan may use the title R.S.W., "registered social worker," but its use has no legal protection. In Missouri membership in the American Association of Social Workers is a criterion for "regular" certification and exempts from examination those eligible for membership in the Association. The California plan qualifies by education and experience without reference to membership in the Association. California "blanketed-in" a group of persons practicing social work during the first year; Missouri did not. California has only one standard of certification; Missouri adds a "provisional" certification for a group with lesser qualifications. The California registration includes 1662 out of an estimated 4300 social workers in the state (as of

August, 1938) ; the Missouri registration shows 280 certified out of 444 members of the American Association of Social Workers in the state (as of August, 1937). Plans are under way in California for developing the voluntary plan into some form of legal certification.¹

Whether this movement should be extended to legal certification only, or eventually also to licensing, in which the state controls practice, is an open question. Certainly, even the spread of voluntary establishment of qualifications on a state level would help social work to obtain a recognizable identity.

Consideration of the desirable basis of registration leads into a discussion of the fourth factor which contributes to public lack of acceptance of social work as a profession: namely, that public welfare agencies in particular have recruited into social work positions a large corps of persons who have not had previous training in this field. No one doubts the necessity of such recruitment in view of the limited supply of trained social workers and the emergency nature of recent public welfare expansion. Nor is there doubt of the valiant service which this group have given. Many of them have a very real professional attitude toward their responsibilities and may be as well qualified, under present conditions, for the particular positions which they are holding, as though they were professionally trained. Some of them are securing, or will secure, social work training which they previously lacked. However, the mixture of social work and non-social work positions in public welfare and of trained and untrained personnel in them has resulted in some confusion as to what is a trained social worker and what is his appropriate function in public welfare. Until social work can define which functions in public welfare are clearly professional social work functions, designate what jobs actually carry the responsibility for such functions, and state clearly what preparation is necessary to fit people for them and for borderline responsibilities, it is in a weak position to say what the basis of state registration

¹ Information from the files of the National Office of the American Association of Social Workers.

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should be; at least so far as such statement involves evaluation of public welfare experience. It is in a still weaker position to claim that social work positions in public welfare should be assigned professional status in classification plans. Clearing up these definitions for the benefit of examining agencies will help in the process of attaining professional status for social work as a whole.

NATURE OF CIVIL SERVICE PROCEDURES

Other and more concrete evidences of the general standing of social work under given merit systems are to be found in the way certain technical considerations are met by civil service agencies: specifically, how social work positions are classified and compensated; how the recruitment program is planned; what kind of qualifications are established for social work positions; and what are the nature and content of competitive examinations.¹

Classification and Compensation. Classification involves grouping positions on the basis of description of functions pertaining to them. While a classification plan in itself determines nothing, it mirrors the duties of persons in public welfare openings, the organizational structure under which they work, and the compensation which they are paid. Information given to the public as to these conditions is a factor in determining who will be attracted to public social work positions, and so indirectly influences the kind of social work that will be practiced. If the picture is not such as to attract qualified personnel, this may be so because positions are not properly classified. It is more likely to be so because the job as conceived by legislature, department head, or other persons in positions of control is not the job as conceived by the qualified social worker. Therefore it is important that social workers know how public welfare positions are classified and consider what steps to take if classification is inadequate or indicates that an unsound conception of the position is held by those who make the policies.

¹ For all these procedures as outlined in the Standards, published by the Social Security Board, see pp. 48-49 and Appendix.

Sometimes social work positions under public auspices are accorded salaries so low that qualified people will not be attracted to them, although in general social work would seem to have fared reasonably well as a government function.

No data seem to be available on rates of pay in public social work as compared to social work under private auspices except in one or two large cities where the situation cannot be regarded as typical. During the past few years, the ratio of public to private social work salaries has varied widely in response to two contradictory stimuli.

The "mushroom" growth of emergency home relief agencies with consequent shortage of personnel has tended to force salaries up. An opposite influence, forcing salaries down, is due to the belief among the uninformed that since anybody could dispense relief under proper supervision, home relief payrolls could be used as a form of work relief—thus killing two birds with one stone. These have ceased to be major issues although traces of their influence remain. Demand for qualified personnel still exceeds supply, but probably not to the earlier extent. There are still some who feel that eleemosynary work of any sort should be poorly paid, and others who regard the use of the public payroll, particularly in relief agencies, as a legitimate way of reducing the cost of relief, but they are a minority. Inclusion of public assistance positions under civil service, thus giving them permanent and dignified status, has undoubtedly been a factor in dispelling this latter point of view.

Persons who are familiar with the field are inclined to believe that private social work has tended to set the salary levels for positions in the permanent public welfare program; and that, while certain marginal private social work agencies pay lower salaries, there is little difference between the two services as far as the lower salaried positions are concerned, the salary scales in the private agencies the country over being perhaps a trifle the higher. While certain private social agencies pay higher top salaries, particularly in large cities, government supervisory and executive public welfare salaries compare favorably on the whole with salaries for similar responsibility under private auspices. This does not apply in one or two of the far western states, where a low maximum is set for all government positions.

Even where salaries are clearly too low to attract qualified personnel, it may be better strategy to direct comment at classification rather than at salaries. If the attack is directed at salary levels so

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set, not only is the cart before the horse, but the protest is likely to be discounted as being affected by self-interest. Classification and salary standardization boards must soon become inured to protests on salaries and one more is no novelty. But a well-founded criticism of the description of duties for social work positions, or classes of positions, together with an exposition of what these require in terms of equipment, and the bearing which this has on compensation rates, is likely to gain a more respectful hearing. Class specifications, however, even where they exist, are sometimes difficult to secure, while information about salaries can be had easily from any public department.

The Feld-Hamilton Act in New York State, previously referred to,¹ had at least two features objectionable to the social work group: the creation of a "Welfare Service" for social work positions outside the "Professional Service"; and the establishment of salaries for specific positions far below what incumbents were then receiving, and so low as to suggest that no proper analysis of jobs concerned had been made. The State Council of the American Association of Social Workers wrote the following letter to members of the Salary Standardization Board, addressing itself to the salary situation rather than to the underlying inadequacy of position-specifications on which the classification and therefore the salaries were based:

June 16, 1938

My dear Mr. ———:

The New York State Council of the American Association of Social Workers has been considering the Feld-Hamilton Career Law (Chapter 859, Laws of 1937) with particular reference to its classification of "welfare service." The Council is strongly in favor of the general Civil Service classification such as your Board has worked out but is concerned because the positions under welfare services (Sec. 5) have been classified in salary grades inconsistent with the duties and responsibilities of such positions. The positions under "welfare service" require education, training and experience of a professional nature com-

¹ See p. 194.

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parable to the other professions included under the Feld-Hamilton Act. The Council respectfully urges that the Salary Standardization Board recognize this in terms of a reallocation of salary grades.

Most of the salary rates of the positions of Section 5 do not affect the salaries of present incumbents, but these salary rates will make it difficult in the future to secure qualified persons with professional training and experience to fill vacancies and will certainly discourage young people from preparing themselves properly for a career in the State welfare services. The Council representing social work in New York State is interested in the status of social work as a career service rather than in the grading of one particular job. In support of this, we believe that individual appeals will be made and will be supported by the Commissioners of the Departments of Social Welfare, Health, Education, Mental Hygiene, Correction, Labor and the Division of Parole, where professional positions occur having to do with social or economic welfare.

Welfare services are one of three classifications, which now begin at the rate of \$1,200 a year, the other two being "purchase and stores" (8C) and "traffic transportation" (8D). Eleven of the classifications begin at a higher salary rate. The degree of responsibility required by these welfare jobs is at least as great as that required for positions within these eleven classifications. For instance, the insurance examiner positions it is true entail extensive responsibility for State finances, and efficient, qualified personnel in this department is recognized as an economy to the State. Welfare services are responsible for the proper administration of a huge portion of the State's budget of over \$385,000,000. The extent of this responsibility can be seen when one takes into consideration the budget of the State Department of Social Welfare alone which is over \$86,000,000 and the further fact that this Department has responsibility for supervising the proper expenditure of approximately \$270,000,000 including federal, state, and local funds. More important in our estimation is the responsibility of welfare services for the care of and service to thousands of the population unable to provide for themselves. Many of them will become a social and financial drain on the State if the persons who serve them are ill-equipped. With skillful service many can be restored to a self-supporting status in the community.

A comparison of the salary range in other groups in the Career Law with that in the welfare services indicates that insufficient recognition has been given either to the importance of these welfare positions re-

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ferred to above or to the necessity for making the compensation commensurate with the importance and responsibility of the position.

The New York State Council makes, therefore, the following suggestion for remedying the situation; that the salary scale under Section 5, Welfare Service, start at \$1,800 instead of \$1,200 and that the salaries for each group be moved up according to the following scale: [Quotation of the scale omitted for reasons of space.]

We will be glad to have an opportunity to discuss this with your Board and for this purpose a special committee of the Council has been appointed if you wish to call upon them.

Sincerely yours,

_____, for the
New York State Council, American
Association of Social Workers

While this letter presents the financial side of the problem clearly, and indicates that inadequate concepts of classification and position content have prevailed, it is suggested that a criticism directed primarily at description and classification of positions, to which salaries are adjusted, might have been a better approach, since it would have attacked the fundamental difficulty and not the result.

What has been said about focusing criticism on classification rather than on compensation in no way discounts the importance of securing adequate compensation for positions in public welfare. It is very likely true that in some sections these positions are underpaid, both in relation to other types of work under government auspices and in relation to the requirements of work to be done.

In Mrs. Booth's study, to which previous reference has been made, it is noted that salaries quoted on examination announcements give evidence that of all the categories studied, the city "worker" fared worst in relation to salaries. (In the "worker" category the author includes those public welfare employes who have direct relationships with the client.) "The city worker's salary has little range and is considerably lower than those of the state and county worker. This gives the impression that there is nothing a city worker can do to improve his salary status except to be promoted to a supervisor's position."¹

¹ Civil Service Procedures for Social Work Positions, p. 51.

Recruitment. Recruiting by effective methods and for qualified people is another factor affecting the status of social work under a merit system.

In all that has previously been said, it is clear that a large share of the burden of recruitment for examinations for public welfare positions must fall on administrators of public welfare departments.¹ Such persons should certainly enlist the aid of professional associations, schools of social work, and national and local functional agencies in this important task. While everything that has been said in the first half of this study about recruiting for government service in general applies to recruitment for public welfare positions, there are one or two additional considerations which need to be borne in mind in this connection.

Although recruiting for "key" positions can be done on a person-to-person basis, recruitment for whole staffs, or for positions that occur in large numbers, must take on a mass character. Since public welfare includes positions requiring knowledge and skills in several different fields, recruitment for certain positions must extend beyond the narrower confines of professional social work. Before a recruiting program can be carried through, and for that matter before an examination procedure can be planned, information is needed as to size and character of the group from which recruits are to be drawn. Approximately how many persons within the various restrictions of residence, age, and sex are qualified to compete? Civil service agencies stand in need of such information, but usually have neither time nor resources to compile it. Making such a census of available personnel might be an appropriate function of civil service committees of the various professional social work associations.

Several chapters of the American Association of Social Workers and certain committees of other professional social work bodies regularly bring to the attention of their membership information about pending civil service examinations and appointments for po-

¹ See p. 98.

sitions not only in the federal, state, and county service in their own area, but also in other states when these do not impose residence restrictions. Since bulletins of schools of social work and of the national professional associations may contain much the same information, some duplication is involved, but the cost is not large and duplicate notices about the same position may have good advertising value.

There is one other useful form of recruiting that may be mentioned here because its purpose is often misunderstood. When a public welfare examination is pending, qualified social workers are urged by professional associates to take the examination for the sake of "seeing that the list is a good one." Without further explanation, this may seem to involve wasted effort, because the presence on the list of names of those who will refuse appointment will not affect the relative order of rank of those who are willing to accept. It is important, nevertheless, for other reasons, that there be able contestants for each examination, particularly if the requirements for entrance are not such as to presuppose professional training. It should be useful to demonstrate to civil service commissions that qualified people achieve better scores than unqualified people, if this be true. If, however, the better qualified competitors do not as a group achieve the better scores, it is important that this be known in order that some check can be made on the validity of the examination. Some examining agencies, moreover, follow the practice of comparing the scores made by candidates who rank high on the examination as a whole with the scores of all candidates on any single test item, in order to check on the usefulness of that item.¹ It is therefore important that the upper quartile of the eligible list be made up of professionally qualified persons. Also, the fact that social work leaders in a community are known to be taking examinations undoubtedly sets a pattern for others and encourages professional acceptance of the whole idea of determining fitness by examination.

¹ See pp. 319-320, 327-328 for further discussion of this practice.

Other elements contribute to the character of a social work recruitment program, particularly for positions above the level of visitor, in which the professionally trained person is more likely to be interested. These influences are the conditions of supply and demand in the social work "market," and the attitudes induced in social workers by such conditions and by others less ponderable.

Because professional training in social work is a comparatively recent development, and because need for trained personnel in public and private agencies has exceeded the output of the professional schools over a period of years, the graduate of a school of social work has been in a position to pick and choose between jobs. Moreover, social work practice has been undergoing tremendous changes; development has been uneven in different fields of practice and over the country, and for these reasons there has been need for such selectivity on the part of the qualified person who desires to practice where he will have most scope to use what he has learned. Factors such as these have lessened the professional social worker's enthusiasm for applying for a job in "a program." He does not want to commit himself, for example, to willingness to accept appointment as county supervisor in a given state without knowing to what county he will be assigned. He wants to weigh the relative advantages to him of working in an urban or rural setting, with a native or foreign-born population; he is interested in the point of view of his board, the professional standing of his executive, the make-up of the staff to be supervised; he may even have pardonable interest in what opportunity the community affords for social and cultural advantages. Moreover, he is unwilling to apply for a position which may not eventuate until months later when board and staff may have changed. Public welfare administrators comment that these attitudes are actual, whether justifiable or not, and create a situation of which some cognizance will have to be taken to make recruiting effective. Jobs and types of jobs will have to be personalized. Not much can be done toward this end in official descriptions of positions on examination an-

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nouncements designed to cover all eventualities—although one is sometimes led to wonder why even the best positions must sound so deadly when described in official language. The best approach would seem to be by way of individual recruiting carried on by the administrator, which should supplement a general recruitment program. In addition, the examination announcements should state that full details would be supplied to persons interested enough to ask for them. The following letter from a state department of public welfare suggests the kind of emphasis that may help to overcome the attitude discussed:¹

August 10, 1936

Dear Miss ——:

The Joint Vocational Service has sent us your record and has written us that you might be interested in the position of Child Welfare Worker in X——. We are enclosing an application blank which is to be sent directly to the office of the —— by August 15th. The examination will be held in Y—— the last part of August or the first of September.

There are three counties in the State which are asking for Child Welfare Workers, A——, B——, and C——. The worker will be considered a member of the staff of the county welfare board, altho her salary will be paid from Federal funds for Child Welfare Services.

A—— County is just south of Y—— and the office of the county welfare board is located in the State Capitol. The Executive Secretary there has done some good ground work for the child welfare services, and there is an excellent Board which is eager to go ahead on a co-ordinated county welfare program. In addition to carrying a case load of court cases, and eventually foster home placement cases, the worker will do some supervision of the Senior Workers in the county on ADC and on child welfare cases which she, herself, does not carry.

B—— County is in the mountains and contains the industrial city of Z——, in addition to the mining and rural farming areas. In this county, there are two trained social workers on the county welfare board staff. This county offers a challenging opportunity. The Juvenile Court Judge is anxious to have a trained Child Welfare Worker to assist in the probation work of the Juvenile Court. There are two small institu-

¹ Letter lent by the Joint Vocational Service.

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tions in the county which will require some service, and with no child-placing agency working in the county, it is likely that a boarding home program will be initiated by the county welfare board. The office of the county welfare board is located in Z——, a city of about 40,000.

C—— is the westernmost county in the State and one of the most scenic counties, situated as it is in the mountains. It is an entirely rural county with mining and agriculture as the chief occupations. The county welfare board has made splendid progress in the community and now is in a position to go ahead on a well-rounded county welfare program. The Executive Secretary has been in the county for three years and has done an excellent administrative and community job. She is well accepted in the community and would be a stimulating person to work with. In this county, the Child Welfare Worker would carry a case load of court cases and perhaps some ADC cases needing special case work service. She would also do some supervision of Senior Workers and work with a private institution in the county which is badly in need of intake and discharge services. This position, too, offers interesting possibilities. The county is somewhat isolated, W——, the county seat, being about 200 miles from the state capital, and 50 miles from Z——. However, C—— county holds many attractions. The climate in the summer is especially nice, and the temperature much cooler than in the central part of the state.

If there is any additional information you would like concerning the prospective positions, we shall be glad to send it to you.

Very truly yours,

Executive Secretary

The writing of this letter was preceded by careful search of the Joint Vocational Service files. It was sent to six qualified registrants of that agency. Recruiting of such a character not only gives the possible competitor some idea of the kind of positions available but must also impress him with the care with which the state department attacks the problem of personnel, thereby giving him some guarantee of the quality of leadership under which he will work.

Entrance Requirements. The third factor in the group of civil service procedures—following classification and recruitment—that

affects the practice of social work under a merit system is the kind of entrance requirements which are set for examinations for public welfare positions. These requirements both affect the caliber of those attracted to compete for public welfare positions and determine at least the minimum qualifications of those who are finally appointed. They "set the ceiling" for the qualifications of appointees so far as they determine the upper level of those who are attracted to compete.

In the preceding pages¹ various considerations affecting the qualifications set for any type of position have been discussed. In a later chapter² certain more technical considerations will be presented which enter into the determination of entrance requirements for public welfare positions. Only one other point, therefore, is stressed here. The social worker who is inclined to criticize published entrance requirements for a given public welfare position must recall that the civil service agency can do no more than try to relate entrance requirements to the position as it is outlined by the department head, or as presented in the class specifications. If the administrator of the public department looks upon the visitor as one whose sole job is to check eligibility, it is useless to criticize the civil service agency for relating requirements to that limited conception. If the parole officer spends a large share of his time in returning to penal institutions adult felons who have violated parole, the examining agency may have to include height, weight, and athletic prowess in entrance requirements and omit other qualifications which social workers usually regard as essential to a good parole program. The civil service agency serves the operating department. In the end, the philosophy of those who control the department sets the pattern for each position within it.

Nature and Content of Examinations. There will be little advantage in seeing that social work positions in public welfare are properly classified and compensated, that qualified persons com-

¹ See pp. 110-126.

² See pp. 284-306.

pete for them, and that entrance requirements for examinations are related to duties and responsibilities, unless the nature and content of the examinations themselves are such as to bring the best material to the front. What can social workers do to achieve this objective?

Individual social workers can, upon request, and within their particular capacities, render expert service to merit agencies, and the social work group as a whole can suggest to the merit agency competent personnel to advise it on general and specific problems relating to examinations.

Social work can carry on research into job content, agency programs, and school curricula, which will give the merit agency the information on which a good examination must be based.

SERVICES THAT SOCIAL WORKERS CAN GIVE TO CIVIL SERVICE AGENCIES

Providing Experts. No civil service commissions, and probably no departmental bureaus administering merit programs, are so situated that they can operate without occasional expert help from technicians in the special fields which they serve. Most civil service representatives are first to recognize this fact and are eager to get the best service available. Sometimes, for lack of information, or for other reasons, their choice of experts is not good. The result then is likely to be entrance qualifications and examinations that are not related to the position, that are incomplete, or inaccurate, or that contravene some professional principle. Therefore it is important to the field of social work, as to other fields, to make sure that advisers selected are the best available for the particular service in question at the moment.

Individual social workers have always been called upon from time to time by civil service commissions to establish entrance qualifications, write examination questions, serve on oral boards, and grade papers. Social work cannot fail to respond to such requests if it wishes criteria for social work examinations to be accurately

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defined and examinations expertly focused on those criteria. There are two pitfalls in the road to this achievement to be considered, however, one having to do with competence of the individual social worker, the other with the attitude of the civil service agency.

To those social workers who have had any experience with civil service examinations, in whatever capacity, a bewildering number of requests are likely to be made by civil service commissions and departmental agencies for a variety of services. For some of these the worker's background may be insufficient. The social worker who may have acted as adviser on some problem of organization or classification, and is recognized to have given helpful service, is promptly requested to serve on an oral board for selecting county directors, to submit ten short answer items for a probation officer's examination, to grade the experience and training of competitors for a position on a state public welfare field staff, or to grade essay questions, with or without a scoring plan, for anything from Director of Child Welfare Services to Investigator, Grade III. The fact that one is a skilful interviewer does not necessarily fit him to grade papers. The individual who can write good examination questions for visiting teachers cannot by virtue of that fact do the same for policewomen or county public welfare directors.

There is some danger, then, that the individual social worker, in his zeal to serve the field may agree to give special services for which he is not equipped. Writing short answer items is a fascinating puzzle. Serving on oral boards is an illuminating and valuable experience for those interested in the technique of interviewing. Grading training and experience for important positions is challenging work and carries with it great responsibility because of the subjectivity of some of the judgments necessary. Any social worker who has experimented in any of these capacities is tempted to experiment in others. The fact that such services are often unpaid has seemingly little effect on the attractiveness of the opportunity to learn and to serve in a new and important field. But it must be pointed out that the social worker who is asked to give a

special sort of assistance has not only responsibility to accede if he is qualified and able, but to refuse if the service is not within the particular area of his competence. If refusal is necessary, he will wish to refer the civil service agency to someone more fully prepared, or still better, to a general source from which full lists may be had of qualified persons.

The degree of specialization in social work as in other fields is often confusing to civil service agencies and administrators, and, therefore, unless otherwise directed, they are likely to ask for further help from sources from which it has been previously received. This tendency to use the same people over and again for different types of services is strengthened by ever-present fear on the part of the civil service agency of leakage of information about examinations. The examining agency very naturally inclines to trust those whom it knows rather than to draw in strangers. Responsibility, therefore, for seeing that expert help is given by persons best qualified for the particular service clearly rests on social work itself. Unless the social work group in each community organizes to give the civil service agency information about, and access to, the necessary variety of technical services, it can hardly criticize the agency for seeking expert service on its own initiative and perhaps not always choosing wisely.

A danger related to the first is that of giving expert service to those civil service agencies that are so impressed with necessity for secrecy about examinations that they will not lay their cards on the table for the information of the social workers whose help they are requesting. There is real question as to how far the social worker should go in submitting test questions to a civil service group whose policy is to change the wording for technical reasons without giving the originator of the questions opportunity to review them.

A situation which illustrates this point recently developed in connection with the written examinations given for certain supervisory and administrative positions in a municipal Department of Public Welfare. The wording of social work questions submitted upon request by quali-

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fied social work advisers was changed by the staff of the Commission in order to avoid certain technical problems inherent in the question as stated. There is no doubt about the Commission's right to make such changes. The difficulty arose from the fact that in perfecting them from the examiner's angle, the items were damaged from the point of view of their social work content. By resubmitting them to the authors after change certain further adjustments of wording could have been made which would have satisfied both sets of experts and saved the Commission from much criticism from social workers taking the examination, as well as from the group of advisers.

Should the social worker submit essay questions without knowing the method by which they will be scored? Should he participate in an oral examination without knowing first something of the composition of the board, the nature of the interview, the method of scoring it, and something about how the interviews are to be related to the rest of the examination? Should he participate in any way as an expert when he is not informed as to who are the other advisers or what is the nature of the examination as a whole? Decisions on test methodology are technical matters within the jurisdiction of the civil service agency, but it would seem that the social worker should be given opportunity to consider the total plan for the examination and decide whether or not to give his services in accordance with his opinion about its soundness.

An examination recently given for position of psychiatric social worker in an Eastern city illustrates difficulties that may arise for social workers who act as advisers for one part of an examination without knowing the plan for the whole.

Officials charged with giving the examination asked a group of social workers, qualified to advise on a job of this sort, to suggest entrance qualifications and submit questions for a written examination, which they did. Entrance qualifications as announced, but not entirely as suggested, required among other items that candidates have an AB degree; graduation from an approved school of social work with certain requirements as to courses and field work; and "2 years of supervised experience in approved clinics or agencies for the study and treatment of personality and behavior disorders of children and adults."

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"Approved clinics or agencies" were described as those "regularly employing the integrated services of psychiatrist, psychologist, and psychiatric social worker, and *providing close supervision* of the inexperienced members of its staff."

Since opportunities for clinical experience are rare, and salaries for the positions were good, a number of psychiatric social workers filed application, not all of whom had had clinic experience. Those who met other requirements and whose experience had been in a clinic of acceptable standard were admitted to the examination. Certain others, presumably those whose experience had been in a family case work or other agency which regularly used the services of psychologist and psychiatrist, received a letter from which the following is quoted:

"The question as to the acceptability of the service you rendered at agencies listed in your application is being studied in connection with your application. . . ." The letter went on to define agency experience as in the announcement, adding, "Each satisfactory social case worker in such an agency must be able to show for each year of credit claimed with the agency, the completion of at least one hundred cases that were studied intensively. Please review your cases with the agencies and select those you have handled jointly with a psychiatrist and the psychologist. Please attach to these a statement as to whether the psychiatrist and the psychologist are on the staff of the agency or not. . . ."

A second letter made the following request:

"Will you please send, as soon as possible . . . the following information:

Name of agency, Executive in charge

Address of agency

Name and case numbers of the 200 cases being submitted.

"Will you please secure from the Executive of the agency in question permission for a representative of the ———— to call and inspect the case records submitted."

The group of social work experts who had been consulted about only a part of the examination but who were popularly identified with the whole, found themselves in the following embarrassing position:

1. Some of them did not approve of emphasis on clinic experience for this particular position, and further deemed it impractical in terms of the limited supply of people so qualified.

2. They had assisted in an examination which had raised one legal

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and several professional questions. Was it legally admissible to set entrance requirements for certain candidates but not for all, which, moreover, had not been mentioned in the announcement? Was it sound from the point of view of social work practice to expect a case worker in the kind of agency described to "complete" in one year 100 cases of the type specified? Was it ethical for an agency to violate the confidential nature of its records by giving them to an outside group, or for the case worker to ask the executive to do so?

3. In addition to the group of social work advisers mentioned, the civil service agency had consulted psychiatrists; therefore those social workers who criticized the procedures were put in the position of challenging the advice of psychiatrists—an embarrassing position for a group of clinically trained social workers.

To decide when participation is indicated, on account of its possible educational value, in a scheme which cannot be fully approved, and when it should be withheld to avoid putting the stamp of professional approval on an unsound system, is one of those questions that must be answered anew in each situation. Certainly nothing is to be gained by the assumption of an attitude on the part of the social work group which might be interpreted as being hostile or obstructionist. Mutual confidence is likely to increase with mutual understanding and it is probable that only very rarely would a request for full information be refused by any civil service agency which had been reasonably approached by social workers.

It must be recalled again in this connection that in most instances the civil service agency does not carry the full responsibility for the nature and content of an examination program. The agency can develop valid criteria for selecting a group of people qualified to fill a job only as it has been defined by the operating department.¹

The social worker, then, whose advice is sought in connection with an examination process, may not only have to settle in his own mind the question of the good faith and competence of the examining body, but also whether the program of the department for

¹ See pp. 82-83.

which selection is being made is such that he wishes to have a part in the process. If he has no quarrel with selection techniques, dislikes the specifications for the position in question, but nevertheless decides to share in the examination process, has he not an obligation to voice his opinion at the time of participation, not only to the civil service agency but to the head of the public welfare department?

It has been implied earlier in this chapter that the social work group as a whole has some responsibility for seeing that a civil service agency needing expert social work advice is told what persons are qualified to give it. The logical groups to develop such a list of qualified advisers would seem to be local professional social work associations. A review of chapter files on civil service in the national office of the American Association of Social Workers indicates that while civil service committees of many chapters have co-operated with civil service commissions in various ways, and some committees and individual social workers have assumed heavy responsibility in relation to examinations, not much has been done by them up to the present to recruit and evaluate the total field of expert social work service available to the civil service agency. In certain jurisdictions, other valuable work has been done by the Association in relation to civil service, but the civil service agency has been left to pick its own expert advisers; in other jurisdictions, the chapter has been active, for example, in relation to examinations, but the activity has been concentrated in the hands of two or three persons.

In much the same sense in which it is dangerous for an individual social worker to assume competence in too many specialized fields, so may there be danger in the assumption by very small social work groups of an advisory function on all steps in the examination process. There are conflicting schools of thought on many questions in social work. In view of this, should any three or four persons serve as judges of entrance requirements, content and grading of written examinations, and as evaluators of personality and

background, sometimes for a variety of positions? This situation can be found today in several sections of the country. The question raised is whether several groups of experts might not better serve for several parts of an examination, leaving to a committee representative of various schools of opinion the task of co-ordinating the enterprise and studying results.

In spite of the danger spots that have been noted, it would be still more hazardous for the social work group to stand aloof and let examinations be devised, administered, and graded without expert opinion from the field, or with opinion which may be only pseudo-expert in relation to some particular test.

The safest course in all respects would seem to be for the total social work group, through some delegated body, to canvass the technical personnel available within the jurisdiction of the agency as to interest and willingness to serve; to classify it according to special kinds of ability; and to submit a panel of names from which the agency might select expert help as needed. This would at once insure full co-operation from the professional social work field, prevent the concentration of responsibility in the hands of a few, and so facilitate the sharing of an educational opportunity. As to the technical difficulties of the examining process as such, it has already been said that social workers will be disposed to seek guidance from experienced civil service authorities in this field or from specialists in tests and measurements on university faculties.

Selection of individual advisers from a panel would rest with the examining agency, but the group to be suggested might well be chosen with broader considerations in mind than technical competence, in order that those finally selected as advisers should have a point of view which would be at least not antagonistic to that of the appointing authority.

On this matter the executive of a state civil service agency contributes the following:

I should like to point out . . . that the selection of examining committees should always be done with due consideration for the opinions

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of the appointing authority. I do not mean by this to surrender to the appointing authority anything with respect to the designation of persons to serve on examining committees. I do think, however, that it is important that the point of view of the appointing authority, presuming always that he is honestly interested in having a good job done, should be carefully considered. No merit system will be quite successful unless in its administration there is the fullest cooperation on the part of the appointing authority. His natural position will be one of antagonism if he is left entirely alone. He needs constant education until he is thoroughly convinced that his own best interests are being served by having the recruitment and selection of his subordinates removed from his immediate control. If the civil service agency proceeds with its processes of recruitment and selection, leaving the appointing authority entirely out of consideration, the natural antagonism he may have to the system will be stimulated, and when the examination is completed and he is handed a list of persons from which to make his appointments, he will be resentful and will do everything in his power to discredit the processes through which the list has been created, no matter how well done and how carefully the whole thing has been planned.¹

In submitting such a panel, the professional group would in a sense vouch for the interest and availability for service of the individuals composing it; would sponsor their knowledge of subject matter, their competence to give a certain form of service, and their integrity and discretion. To be of maximum usefulness, the members of the panel might be classified according to the fields which they represent, the skills which they possess, their competence to give service on a state or local level, and in examining for administrative or supervisory, and urban or rural positions. The list should preferably be annotated with data which would show the basis on which the selection was made.

Drawing up such a panel would not preclude less formal appointment of a group to represent professional associations and other social workers in advising the commission on more general matters. Such an advisory group might with profit meet regularly with the commission or its staff to discuss the effectiveness of past

¹ Quoted from a letter received November 28, 1938.

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procedures and any indicated changes. With the aid of the special experts, it could interpret the work of the civil service staff to social work, as well as interpret social work objectives to the civil service agency.

Certain of the larger civil service commissions employ full-time specialists representing the major fields served by the commission. The United States Civil Service Commission employs two social workers, and the commissions in New York City and New York State both have one social worker on their staff—a great asset both to the commissions and to the field of social work. It may be argued that when a commission employs a full-time social worker it needs no further expert advice from social work. The qualified social worker in such a position of responsibility, however, sees himself not as sole authority for the commission on all matters pertaining to social work, but as a channel through which the commission may secure authoritative and expert opinion from the field itself. The social worker in such a relationship opens the avenues to effective professional consultation, recognizing that he cannot be expert on all matters affecting the practice of public welfare and that there is value in group thought and group support. For reasons of size of staff, costs, and number of fields to be served, it is not likely that the use of a salaried expert can be extended to many examining agencies. With or without such professional representation on the staff it is important that a line of approach for special consultation be established—a two-way channel through which co-operation of commission and profession can be made effective to their mutual advantage.

If civil service jurisdiction is statewide and if state organizations of the several professional social work associations exist, these would seem to be the logical co-operating bodies. In the absence of statewide social work organization, some combination of local efforts may be indicated or a single local group might extend its interests to include the statewide problem of securing technical service.

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In connection with certain important state examinations, civil service commissions sometimes prefer to draw upon the assistance of out-of-state social workers. A proper function for some national social work body, perhaps for a national committee on civil service of the American Association of Social Workers, might be to draw up a national panel of social workers, classified along the lines suggested for local panels. These persons might be called upon for service either by the United States Civil Service Commission or by any of the state commissions when out-of-state experts are preferred.

The point is made repeatedly throughout this book that there is need to pool studies already undertaken to identify social work skills and to establish standards of preparation or performance in public welfare positions. There is equal need for social workers to study examination procedures and to pool the results of attempts to test information and ability of those who are candidates for public welfare positions. For this reason it would seem to be important that any group of social workers who have been co-operating in a public welfare examination should foregather afterward to record the methods used; to analyze their own reactions to the process, and the opinions of those who have observed it, or who have participated in it as candidates; to note problems and obstacles; and to discuss ways of overcoming them in future examinations. An analysis of correlations between examination scores and records of performance would be the perfect basis for such discussion, but such analysis is rarely available for reasons of time, cost, and lack of criteria of performance. Even without this, however, a group discussion can produce suggestions which may be helpful both to subject experts and to the staff of the examining agency.

Following the large-scale examinations of 1937 and 1938 for public assistance personnel in Indiana and Pennsylvania, the social workers who had worked with the examining agency in one capacity or another met to record their experience and impressions. In Indiana the local social work group had co-operated in all parts of the examination and

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met as a group afterward to study and record their impressions of the whole examination. In the Pennsylvania examinations, 70 social workers from Pennsylvania and 133 from nearby states had served as oral board members. They met later in groups in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Washington, Baltimore, New York, Columbus, and Indianapolis. The results of their deliberations were pooled and submitted to the Employment Board for the Department of Public Assistance, which was the examining agency.¹

Supplying Technical Information. Social workers can protect the caliber of public welfare examinations not only by seeing that examining agencies have ready access to the best technical advice, but also by producing concrete material about social work. Such material is needed by civil service experts to help them to function more effectively in relation to the public welfare services,² and in order to give real validity to public welfare examinations. The material may be in the form of information about social work skills, responsibilities, criteria of competence, content of training school courses, correlation of courses to practice, the nature and quality of agency programs, and all that comes under the heading of "equivalents." It may be in the form of constructive criticism of examinations that have been given. In order to offset the volume of criticism which arises from misinformation and lack of knowledge of examining methods, local organizations of social workers of several cities have undertaken after each examination the task of collecting current criticism; of studying, evaluating, and redefining it for presentation to the examining agency; and of using it as a basis for interpreting to their own group the objectives and program of the examining agency.

¹ The results of the study of the Indiana group are reported in *Examinations for Social Workers in Indiana*, by Leona E. Massoth, in the *Compass*, vol. 19, no. 2, November, 1937, pp. 13-18. The discussions of the social work members of oral boards in the Pennsylvania examinations were not published but summarized and included in a staff report on oral board administration to the Employment Board of the Department of Public Assistance.

² Discussed further on pp. 284-317.

CHAPTER XX

RECOMMENDING ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING TOTAL BACKGROUND

HAVING made this general exploration of the area "Where Social Work and Merit Systems Meet," we now return to a more extended consideration of those special services which civil service commissions ask of social workers in connection with tests. While these technical services are many and varied, the present discussion is limited to five types most commonly sought, namely:

1. Defining entrance requirements for examinations
2. Drafting items for written examinations
3. Grading essay items
4. Serving on oral examining boards
5. Grading training and experience of candidates

These five services are listed here separately and in the order in which they usually relate to selection of candidates, but the first and last will be considered together, since much that is pertinent to a discussion of entrance requirements also pertains to the later evaluation of the additional training and experience of those candidates who are not eliminated by entrance requirements. The other topics will be treated in their order in succeeding chapters.

Suggestions in the following pages will not of themselves equip social workers to plan or conduct examinations. In the final analysis these tasks are responsibilities of the technical staff of the civil service agency for which they, and not social workers, must take credit or blame. The suggestions offered here should, however, give the social worker some elementary knowledge of, and some readiness of approach to, considerations important in devising tests. Through them it is hoped that the social worker who is offering advice as an expert consultant, may be helped to avoid making sug-

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gestions which in content or form will obviously run counter to the policy and tried techniques of examining agencies. The social worker will accept the fact that his advice may not be taken in toto. It may be taken in direct proportion not only to its professional soundness, but to the facility with which it can be adapted to the civil service agency's needs. The path of constructive co-operation may be made smoother by bearing in mind some fundamental "do's" and "don't's."

In acting as a social work adviser to a civil service agency,

Do: Try to understand the extent of the service requested and the civil service agency's situation and needs before offering any suggestions.

Concentrate on the establishment of a cordial working relationship before suggesting any radical changes in plan or method.

Remember that social work is only one of many special fields which the civil service agency touches and that its policy in relation to tests in the field of social work may have to be correlated with policy on positions in other fields.

Recognize that civil service agencies are public agencies, and as such subject to laws, rules, budgetary limitations, judicial decisions, and the less direct controls of public opinion as indicated by reaction from legislatures, the press, and special pressure groups. These may affect a plan for selection in broad or in detailed ways.

Remember that personnel administration is now a specialized field in which commendable scientific progress in testing technique has already been made and in which a scientific spirit prevails toward the validation of tests.

Try to co-ordinate the approach of all professional social work groups so that the civil service agency does not seem to be battered by a cross-fire of suggestions from within the same field.

Remember that the civil service agency's fear of leakage of information about examinations is based on a very real danger. Escape of information about the nature of a single test item may be sufficient cause to cancel a whole examination. Those who act as advisers therefore must do so with sealed lips!

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Do not: Attempt to advise on method, content, or form of an examination or any part thereof without having seen a full written description of the position in question. Examination announcements and class specifications are too compressed to answer the purpose without elaboration. Neither is it safe to depend on one's own recollection of the position; a written statement is needed.

Embarrass the civil service agency by becoming another pressure group except as a last resort.

Attempt to take over the civil service agency's job in respect to any test procedure, and particularly in technical matters such as content of examination or methods of scoring.

Antagonize by proffering advice that is obviously inexpedient or impossible for the civil service agency to accept.

Compromise on the score of expediency without making it clear that what is suggested is a compromise and not a desideratum.

Continue to give advice by the back door route.

Be "used" to put the stamp of professional approval on something which should not be approved.

Irritate the technical staff by continuing to disregard what they have indicated as necessary limitations on content and form for tests.

RECOMMENDING ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

An early and constantly recurrent request made by examining agencies to the profession of social work is for a definition of standards of training and experience which may be used in drawing up entrance requirements for public welfare positions and assigning score value to the background of candidates. The typical central personnel agency is much more confident of its ability to construct valid written tests and to conduct oral examinations for a specialized field than of its ability to put the proper evaluation on the preparation of individuals. Civil service agencies wish to know in considerable detail what experience or training is deemed to be necessary for certain positions; what is meant in social work by

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such terms as "accredited" or "recognized" schools and agencies; and what experience or training is considered "related" or "equivalent." The inability of social work, in its present stage of development, to return precise and comprehensive answers to these questions is without doubt hampering the processes of setting sound entrance requirements for social work positions, and later on in the selective process, of grading additional training and experience.

To define standards of equipment or of performance is a difficult task for any developing profession particularly if the demand comes with pressing insistence at a time when the whole horizon of the field is changing; when the profession must extend its boundaries because of internal developments, and also because its program is affected by the growth of a new conception of governmental responsibility toward the individual (evidenced, for example, in the new program of social insurance). If the field of social work seems unprepared at this time to accede promptly, constructively, and with accord to this request, this is due neither to lack of interest or desire, nor to inherent weakness, but rather to the fact that the present situation precipitates bewildering demands for formulations of a more definite sort than were called for in the days before the profession was confronted so directly by civil service issues.

Nevertheless, right here is perhaps the point of greatest opportunity for the profession of social work in relation to the whole civil service process. The solution of these problems is admittedly not to be decided by a group of people sitting in conference around a table. It requires the most painstaking and skilful research, carried on by many groups within the profession, and indeed individual social workers and committees are so working all over the country on the problems of defining and standardizing requirements, terminology, and criteria. Conclusions will gradually emerge from careful scanning of practice, and from collection, analysis, and correlation of the results. All that can be done here is to "throw into the hopper" certain suggestions on method and

certain basic considerations to be borne in mind while working at the problem.

Analysis of the kind and length of experience which is desirable preparation for a given position is a qualitative as well as quantitative process. To analyze quality and agree on standards for estimating it is difficult in the field of the more exact sciences and professions. In social work the need to make qualitative analysis has long been recognized. While much effort has already been expended, little material has resulted in a form that is available and useful to examining agencies, and little unanimous opinion can be mustered.

PRESENT NEEDS VERSUS FUTURE OBJECTIVES

It is probably true that personnel standards will never be raised appreciably in the public welfare field unless the social work group aims at a professional standardization of entrance requirements at least for supervisory positions—perhaps a higher standardization than civil service commissions and the public will readily accept at this time. It is also true that should the social work group, for practical reasons, recommend lower entrance requirements than are professionally desirable it will be difficult to defend raising them in the future once the original recommendation has been adopted. Since there is little value and some danger in making recommendations which are unrealistically high, social workers may find themselves on the horns of a dilemma. One recourse would be to preface a recommendation with an explicit statement of what the profession believes would be a desirable standard to set for a given position, and to follow this with the recommendation of a standard, temporarily acceptable, based on present conditions, as for example:

We believe that persons *eventually appointed* to the position of —— should possess the following qualifications: _____

Allowing for the power of the various parts of the examination to

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select the better material from the poorer, we believe *entrance requirements* for this position *should* be as follows: _____

Realizing, however, that because of the number of appointments to be made and the shortage of qualified people willing to accept appointment at the stated salary, it may be impossible for the Commission to announce these requirements at this time, we recommend that the entrance requirements for this position *for this examination only* be as follows: _____

Such a statement, while setting a desired standard, both for appointees and for competitors, would yet recognize the necessity for a temporary compromise.

RELATING REQUIREMENTS TO DUTIES OF THE POSITION

Before attempting to make recommendations each type of public welfare position should be "taken apart" in each jurisdiction to arrive at a basis for entrance requirements or for grading background. It may prove useful to study entrance requirements in announcements of examinations for similar positions in other localities. This may yield concrete suggestions as to wording and form of entrance requirements for the position in question, but such a study, while it may be thought-provoking, should not serve as a substitute for a definition of requirements based on study of the position itself and the milieu in which it is set. It is unsafe to assume that the description of any one position and, by the same token, any one set of entrance requirements, are transferable from one jurisdiction to another, or even retain validity from year to year in one department.

Nor can acceptable standards of equipment for a specific public welfare position be arrived at through adopting either membership requirements for a professional organization or criteria already developed for a position in the private field under the same title. If either chances to coincide with vocational requirements for the position in question, the task of description of qualifications is simplified, but it cannot be assumed a priori that they will be identical.

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The process of analysis of public welfare positions has been undertaken to date only in isolated instances and but seldom, it would seem, in preparation for announcements of examinations.¹ The most outstanding and thorough job study in the public welfare field is probably that recently completed by the American Public Welfare Association, to which reference has previously been made.²

The study attempted to analyze personnel data, position descriptions, and organization relationships primarily in connection with certain typical and recurrent positions in five state agencies, 21 counties, and two cities. Well-developed agencies were deliberately selected as offering richer material for analysis than would a cross section of the entire field of public social work. The authors made no attempt to evaluate quality of performance but rather sought to describe existing situations and to define common denominators. They modestly state: "As it stands, the study indicates starting points and techniques for individual agencies interested in studying the total job within the public welfare agency."

The tools used were in some respects similar to those employed in a careful industrial or commercial job analysis:

1. Planned interviews with people in key positions in state and county agencies
2. A personnel questionnaire which was to be filled out by members of county and state social work staffs, showing age, education, past experience, salary, and case loads
3. A description of each position studied, written by the incumbent
4. Detailed "logs" of one week's activities
5. Organization charts of state and county agencies

The study is a sample of those needed by public social work for personnel administration. Such studies would be useful to the personnel departments of individual agencies, especially if they were carried out on a more intensive level, reported in a more detailed way, and if their findings could be correlated with service ratings. They are needed on a state and national scale to help define some of the more general issues

¹ But under the new Standards, published by the Social Security Board, states will be required to base examination procedures upon job analyses. See Appendix.

² See p. 257.

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discussed in the following pages. The particular bulletin under discussion is well worth reading by those who are interested in the technique of position-analysis; by those who wish to know who the public social worker is and what he does; and by students of qualifications, terminology, and organization in the public welfare field.

After the content of the position has been defined, it will be necessary to determine the personality traits, age, and the assets of training and experience that will best enable the individual to meet the demands of the position. The social worker needs to recall at this point that there are two aspects to the problem of defining qualifications: first, what are the qualifications that he would like to see the holder of a given position possess; and second, with that standard in mind, what kind of entrance requirements may it be sound and expedient to set as the minimum for admission to an examination for that position. In the practice of certain civil service agencies, and in relation to certain types of positions, these two aspects may be relatively similar; in others they may be far apart. Entrance requirements are the first hurdle in selective competition. They are meant to eliminate whole groups of people on the assumption that few of them could function satisfactorily in a given capacity because of certain lacks in their equipment, and despite any additional assets which they may have; and on the counter-assumption that there is strong probability that most of those admitted can function better than those excluded. Entrance requirements, then, are only a preliminary step in the more affirmative process of finding people of desired qualifications.

Remembering this distinction, the social work adviser asks himself, How can entrance requirements be so defined that they will achieve the wished-for preliminary sifting of candidates without taking on too much of the burden of selection, for which tests are better adapted?

Requirements as to Personality. Examination announcements often contain statements of qualities of personality required, not

with the expectation that candidates will list those qualities which they possess as they list details of education and experience, but because the announcement of desired qualities of personality may be necessary as a basis for oral examinations.

Possession or lack of the necessary personal attributes should ideally be established by a thorough qualitative investigation of past experience. It is, however, often impractical to incorporate such an investigation into the examination.¹ When for reasons of time and expense only cursory investigation or verification of past experience is possible, the oral examination has to carry the burden of establishing the suitability of the candidate's personal characteristics to the job in question. As previously noted,² in certain jurisdictions it has been ruled that judgments in oral tests may be based only on factors announced as essential to performance in the job—hence their inclusion in the advertised statement. If the statement is to serve its purpose it should be limited to traits which are measurable by oral or written tests. Parenthetically, a somewhat rapid survey of announcements suggests that such descriptions need to be a bit less idealistic and that some simplification of them is in order. A candidate for the presidency could not be expected to produce all the assets of personality announced as necessary for visitors' positions in some jurisdictions. A study of public welfare examinations previously cited lists 70 qualities of personality as essential for the various social work positions according to announcements analyzed.³ In the interest of clarity, one would hope these could be reduced by 50 per cent at least, and still include all traits indispensable in the public social work field.

Requirements as to Age. The study undertaken by the American Public Welfare Association also makes some analysis of age requirements fixed in announcements of examinations. The impression derived from this and other analyses is that age require-

¹ See pp. 111-112, 129-131.

² See p. 170 and footnote one.

³ See Booth's Civil Service Procedures, p. 32.

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ments have been set with little examination of the service records of employes at various age levels. While other considerations already indicated¹ may affect age limits, the probable quality of performance of those to be selected, based on analysis of performance of those employed in the past, should be the important consideration in determining age limits, as in determining requirements for entrance.

This kind of checking is not only long and expensive, but the requisite service records do not exist in many jurisdictions. Without such a basis for setting age standards it would seem that neither minimum nor maximum age limits in entrance requirements should be too restrictive, perhaps leaving discretion in the hands of oral boards and appointing officers to determine at what points youth and advanced years are a handicap.

The Personnel Office of the Department of Social Security of Washington State has met the age question by setting no rigid requirement but by providing that 5 points for every five years of age over fifty be deducted from each candidate's score for qualifications.² Within a few years, when the majority of the veterans of 1917-1918 are over fifty, such a provision would automatically cancel the effect of many veteran preference laws. However, in the federal classified service 28.57 per cent of the veteran preference appointments in the fiscal year 1939 were received by persons under the age of enlistment in 1918. This percentage of "peace-time" veterans increases each year.

Requirements as to Education and Experience. While we are in our present stage of experimentation with the techniques of examinations, there is sound reason for entrance requirements which set definite minima of education and experience for nearly all positions, and a professional level for those positions which are in professional fields and are of supervisory nature. Previous training

¹ See pp. 112-113.

² Scoring scales from Report on Scoring of Applications, by Nathan Maccoby. Personnel Office, Washington State Department of Social Security, Seattle, Washington, September 3, 1937, pp. 6-8.

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and experience are probably still the best presumptive evidence that a person has certain skills which cannot be tested by any examination techniques but which are needed in a public welfare position. Knowledge of this fact, coupled with the very natural desire to establish high levels of performance and to achieve public recognition of the kind of work for which the profession stands, may cause the social worker to throw too much weight on entrance requirements even to the point where they are unrelated to the needs of the position, impractical in terms of demand and supply, unrealistic in terms of local opportunity, or inexpedient in terms of local practice and prejudice.

The Personnel Office of the Department of Social Security of the State of Washington in its recent examinations used an interesting device to get around possible hostility created by rejections for admission. All persons applying for the examination were given a copy of the entrance requirements, in which levels for experience and training were relatively high. If, despite the announcement, some persons who did not meet the requirements filed applications, they were not rejected. Keeping announced requirements high cut volume of applications and costs. Accepting applications from all who wished to file prevented controversy and hard feeling in individual instances. The difficulty with this system would seem to be that as the practice of not holding to the announced requirements became recognized the public would tend to ignore them.¹

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING REQUIREMENTS

Costs. Reasonably high entrance requirements have been mentioned as one way of cutting examination costs.² It must be remembered, however, that too high entrance requirements may increase costs through producing inadequate eligible lists and thereby necessitating repeated examinations. Arguments from social workers for raising the level of entrance requirements may receive scant

¹ Information from a release from the State Department of Social Security, Olympia, Washington, May 20, 1937.

² See p. 114.

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attention if they ignore this practical consideration. A state civil service executive cites the following instance of what seemed to him an unrealistic recommendation:

A group of social workers recently assisted the state civil service agency to give a group of public welfare examinations. When the examinations were complete and the lists published, the social work advisers submitted a written critique of the process to the civil service executive. The burden of their comment was that educational requirements were too low and should be raised before the next examinations. When asked how he felt about the comment, the executive replied in effect: "I appreciate the fine work they have done and the soundness of realistically high qualifications. These people, however, forget some things. Our law prevents us from setting educational requirements. Therefore any that we set have to be in terms of equivalents for experience. How can we raise our educational requirements without raising our experience requirement, which is already over-high for beginners' jobs? Salaries in the public field are lower than those for comparable positions in private social work and our residence requirement prevents us from going outside. Our case loads are nearly double those in the private field. We recruited far and wide and still our examinations did not produce a sufficient eligible list for available positions on the basis of the requirements which these social workers deplore. In the face of these facts, how can we expect taxpayers to finance repeated examinations with higher requirements?"

*The Career System.*¹ It is important that social workers be aware of evidences of the trend toward career service and its possible implications for standards of service in departments of public welfare. It is not intended to suggest here that there is evidence that recruiting highly intelligent but technically or professionally unequipped persons is taking the place of recruiting already technically or professionally qualified persons for distinctly specialized posts. This could hardly occur unless government decided to supply full technical and professional education in special schools inside or outside of government walls, much as it trains its army officers at West Point. It is suggested, however, that government,

¹ See pp. 36-38, 98, 101-104, 210-213.

through civil service agencies, is exploring to see what positions are actually so specialized that full-fledged pre-trained technicians are necessary to fill them, and which are of a more general character and therefore may be filled on the career basis. This tendency puts a burden on all the professions to make intelligent studies of job content and professional preparation in order to be able to answer with facts instead of theories the proposals which may be made to extend the career idea to professional positions.

The fact that tenure of office is usually secured under civil service systems raises the problem of the quality of the department's future program if entrance minima are set which do not presuppose professional preparation. If, along with protection of tenure, the career idea prevails to the point where promotions are usually made from within, and if entrance requirements contain a liberal supply of equivalents for education and professional training, what protection can be set up against an increasing mediocrity of departmental performance? On this point Mr. Meriam suggests that social work consider the system used in the Army, Navy, and public health services by which officers are required to qualify within a given number of years for a grade higher than that of the position they occupy, or be dropped from the service. Such a system implies departmental training after entrance to the service, or leaves of absence or "time off" for outside training, and periodic tests.¹

In relation to public welfare positions such a system would seem to have much to commend it if applied to successive grades within a single class of position. The case worker or supervisor who could not progress in a given number of years from visitor or supervisor Grade III, to visitor or supervisor Grade I, respectively, is probably not a great asset to his department. When applied as between classes of positions in public welfare, the situation is somewhat different. A superior visitor may never be a good supervisor; a good

¹ Meriam, Lewis, Civil Service Testing for Social Work Positions, *in* the *Compass*, vol. 19, no. 1, October, 1937, pp. 3-6.

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supervisor may be able to teach and demonstrate but may not develop administrative ability.

Local Standards. A further practical consideration in recommending entrance requirements or even in describing desirable qualifications for appointees, is the generally accepted educational standard in the community. Particularly when there are residence requirements, and if there is only one "accredited" college in the state, it is obviously necessary to consider these facts in setting an entrance minimum and in assigning score values to the education of candidates. If a state department of education considers a particular normal school course as equivalent to a college education, another department in the same jurisdiction will be somewhat committed to accepting that standard. If there is no school of social work in the state, but there are isolated courses on public welfare in the state university, it would seem questionable to make social work training in an accredited school a requirement for entrance to an examination.¹

Local standards must also be kept in mind in considering the minima of experience acceptable for admission. For example, if public welfare experience is to be made a prerequisite to entrance to a particular examination, it would seem wise to recognize local public welfare experience even though that experience may have been in an agency hitherto generally regarded as unprofessional or sub-standard. Also, if the criterion for admissible public experience is rather low, then that set for similar experience in private agencies cannot logically be too exclusive. If it has been established in a particular community by an empirical method that public health nursing or work in some other profession provides as good or better background for public welfare in that jurisdiction than does experience in local social work agencies, it may be advisable at that time in that community to credit such experience for

¹ The United States Civil Service Commission, drawing candidates from the country at large, does not have this problem and can use nationally acceptable standards in relation to social work training.

entrance requirements. It is not intended to suggest that there is no difference in value in education, training, or experience in organizations of different caliber, but rather that local recognition or lack of recognition of such values will have to be considered in setting minima.

Even when entrance minima are low, the performance of candidates in written and oral examinations will be likely to show which have the better educational preparation; and it is possible to differentiate further in the weighting given to this factor in scoring total background.

This discussion leads again inevitably to the whole question of evaluating professional standards.

CONFUSION OF PRESENT PROFESSIONAL CRITERIA

How can standards for judging the character and value of training courses and agency programs be so described that they are defensible and unequivocal? Both are constantly undergoing study and evaluation by the several professional associations, by the national functional agencies,¹ and by the schools of social work, largely in connection with determining eligibility for admissions of various types.

In Relation to Training. The official body representing education for social work is the American Association of Schools of Social Work. The most comprehensive body representing the interests of practicing social workers is the American Association of Social Workers. It might be expected that these two agencies would adopt identical positions regarding training; yet the American Association of Social Workers, while approving applications for membership from graduates of schools which are members of the American Association of Schools of Social Work, also accepts graduates of some schools and courses not recognized by that body.

¹ Such as the Family Welfare Association of America and the Child Welfare League of America.

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Moreover, considerable sentiment has developed within the American Association of Social Workers for further modification of membership requirements, particularly on behalf of social workers whose training and experience have been outside the case-work area.

The American Association of Schools of Social Work determines curriculum standards in relation to the whole field of social work and not to public welfare positions alone. The evolution of its member schools, moreover, has taken place chiefly during the period of the ascendancy of private agencies in the social work field. In recent years public social work has grown on so rapid a scale that there would seem to be some question as to whether the curricula of member schools could keep up with, to say nothing of keeping ahead of, this development. Only 35 schools, located in 21 out of 48 states, are members of the American Association of Schools of Social Work.¹ The shortage of their own available graduates, taken in connection with existing residence requirements, has made it impossible for these member schools to offer enough graduates to fill public welfare positions in the states where the schools are located and in the other 27 states as well. It would hardly be reasonable, therefore, to describe acceptable training for public welfare positions in terms of courses given in that group of member schools alone.

Courses of training for public welfare have been introduced in many state universities and colleges having neither schools of social work which meet membership requirements of the American Association of Schools of Social Work, nor courses acceptable for membership in the American Association of Social Workers. Other educational institutions are planning to establish similar courses in response to popular demand or official request. By what criteria shall these be judged? Since social work can give only partial answers at this time, civil service agencies, faced with an immediate

¹ As of September, 1939.

problem, create their own answers—different ones in each jurisdiction.

In the study of examination announcements previously cited, there were found ten different descriptions of what is acceptable social work training. These range from "training in a school of social work that is a member of the American Association of Schools of Social Work" (not always correctly designated) to various "vague and loose though high-sounding requirements."¹

In Relation to Experience. A somewhat similar problem exists with reference to evaluating agency experience.

First of all there is disagreement on what types of experience are most desirable for some public welfare positions. What about the city, county, or state administrator? Is his job a social work job "pure and simple" or is it a job of public administration in which a knowledge of social work principles is necessary? There is no simple answer to this question for all territories although there are groups on each side who hold conflicting opinions with equal fervor.

One group is sure that, while the public welfare administrator must have administrative experience, he must also have social work training in order to give leadership to his county or state and to his professional staff. A second group holds that it is only necessary for the administrator to have social work training or experience in the small county where he does most of the job single-handed; that where there is a second-in-command with sound professional training, administrative ability in the executive is the primary consideration. A third group, and it must be admitted that legislators, public officials, and taxpayers figure heavily in this group, contends that experience in business and government is all that is necessary to make a good public welfare administrator. Still others take the view that, while public welfare administrators should eventually all have training in social work and in adminis-

¹ Booth's Civil Service Procedures, pp. 27-28, 31-32.

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tration, in the immediate present this is not possible; that effort therefore should be temporarily concentrated on getting supervisors with social work training, administrators with administrative training, and inducing schools to train for a combination of the two skills.

In the meantime, while the discussion goes on, if there is any truth in the contention that the job is one of public administration, there arise two questions—one, the relative value of business or other public administrative experience versus social work administrative experience; and the further question of how training in schools of general public administration should be accredited.

Even were there complete agreement about the kind of experience which best prepares for public welfare positions, there would still remain the baffling problem of how to evaluate its quality.

The national and local membership committees of the several professional social work associations, the schools of social work, the national functional agencies, the Joint Vocational Service, and local councils of social agencies have for years been struggling to decide what constitutes an "accredited" agency in theory and to evaluate the work of individual agencies.

To define "accredited" agencies in terms of standards acceptable to other groups, as, for instance, agencies which are accepted by schools as field work centers, or agencies eligible for membership in a given national functional agency, only throws the burden of definition further back, but establishes no fundamental criteria. Caliber and training of supervisory personnel is another basis on which evaluation of agency experience is made. None of these seems satisfactory in itself. National functional agencies have varying standards to meet varying programs. Quality of work in an agency varies with changes in budgets and in supervisory and executive personnel. Even agency programs change with changes in staff and board membership.

The several organizations that have wrestled with this problem

of agency evaluation undoubtedly have material in their files which would be of great value to civil service agencies if it were in available form. Each of these organizations has gone through the process of trying to isolate criteria by which agency programs may be evaluated. Each of them has measured many individual agencies by some standard even though they may not have analyzed its nature. In other words, the occasion, and not the problem, is new to social work.

It must be remembered also that a similar problem has faced each of the other professions, and that certain of them have partially solved it. In the course of years education and medicine have succeeded in setting some objective criteria of quality for colleges and hospitals which can be used by civil service agencies because they are generally understood and accepted. In fairness to social work, however, it must be admitted that these professions have had a much longer and more stable period in which to develop their criteria.

TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE AS VIEWED BY CIVIL SERVICE AGENCIES

In most instances, for want of readily available data, civil service agencies apparently make their own criteria for evaluating training and experience, sometimes with the help of social workers, often without—perhaps because reverberations of arguments within the field reach their ears.

Apparently their usual practice is to consider experience in one agency as against experience in another on the basis of local opinion without any attempt to arrive at more objective criteria, and to interpret professional education in very broad terms.

Again quoting the study of civil service examinations for social work previously referred to, the author reports, "Only one jurisdiction attempted a definition of a 'recognized social agency.' The agency must have been approved for field work by a 'recognized school of social

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work' but the agency offered no definition for a 'recognized school of social work.'"¹

In a field which does not have licensing, state registration, or certification, and which lacks a clearly defined and publicly recognized body of technical skills taught only in special schools, civil service agencies cannot readily accept superficially easy solutions for determining entrance requirements, such as crediting only training received in schools which are members of the American Association of Schools of Social Work or accepting membership requirements of professional social work associations as the standard for training and experience.

Washington is the only state in which the law or the rules and regulations governing the operation of a merit system for public welfare give or imply official recognition to a professional association as a source of information. Even in Washington the statement is given in the most general terms: "It shall be the duty of the Board of Sponsors . . . to call upon such recognized state associations of professional standing, as appropriately represent a given classification of work, to assist in drawing up specifications, writing the examinations, etc."²

The Problem of Determining "Equivalents." There is another problem relating to standards on which examining agencies would like the help of social workers. It arises from the necessity of stating entrance requirements in terms of acceptable minima and then allowing substitution of equivalent combinations of training and experience.

Allowing substitution of "equivalents" involves evaluating one type of experience or training as against another, and also weighing the value of experience as such against training. With the present inevitable confusion and lack of agreement on standards of acceptability for the separate fields of training and experience, it is

¹ Booth's Civil Service Procedures, p. 31.

² Rules and Regulations Governing the Merit System for the State Department of Social Security and County Welfare Departments as Required in Chapters 162 and 180, Laws of Washington, 1937, sec. 3 (4).

little wonder that the civil service agency is baffled when it comes to working out "equivalents" of training in terms of experience and vice versa. The author of the study on examination announcements previously cited says of the result: "The terminology [experience qualifications] is loose, the standards vague, and almost without exception the equivalents used taper off into ephemeral all-embracing statements that mean little or nothing." She adds, "In some jurisdictions six weeks' training equals one year's experience, while in others it takes two years of training to equal one year's experience."¹

This problem of how much experience equals a year's training has to be met in writing each set of entrance qualifications, in applying them, and in building and applying plans for grading education and experience as a part of the examination. The social worker is likely to disagree with the civil service examiner, at least in some jurisdictions, at this point. The professional social worker, in common with representatives of other professions, stresses importance of general and professional education. The civil service representative—at least of the older school—often tends to discount education and to value experience.

The Office of Education of the United States Department of the Interior has recently made a study entitled *Education and the Civil Service in New York City*. In discussing the attitude of civil service commissions toward education versus experience, the authors make the following statement:

In a half century of preoccupation with the elimination of the patronage system from public employment the civil service commissions have come to rely upon a series of recruiting techniques which place a high value upon "experience" and which ignore, or which even indirectly penalize, the training embodied in public education.²

¹ Booth's *Civil Service Procedures*, p. 30.

² Bulletin 1937, no. 20, by Wallace S. Sayre and Milton Mandell. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1938, p. 3. (See also pp. 118-120 of this book.)

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There is nothing new in this conflict of opinions; but the fact that the problem is old makes it no easier to solve. It is possible that some give and take is needed on both sides. The social worker may be open to proof that for basic social work positions certain types of experience may be a satisfactory substitute for professional education. The traditional civil service point of view toward education has been already greatly modified in certain jurisdictions.

In the same bulletin¹ and in relation to the New York City Civil Service Commission, the authors find:

These recent advances in the establishment of educational requirements for entrance to the competitive examinations in the New York City civil service have been important in removing several of the barriers between education and the civil service of the city. There is still prominent, however, a tendency to retain the traditional emphasis upon experience as the primary standard of selection.

Every social worker has read one examination announcement after another for public welfare positions in which requirements are definitely stated, certain specific equivalents noted, but in which the description trails off into the meaningless and undefined "or any equivalent combination of training and experience." One of the real hazards of including such loose definitions for "equivalents" is that careful work done by a professional social work group in defining fundamental requirements may be entirely invalidated if interpretation of the loosely defined "equivalent" of that fundamental preparation is left to specialists in personnel, as is often the case. Valiant work has been begun in defining "equivalents" but it is spotty and has not yet stood the test of time. Moreover, determination of what-is-the-equivalent-of-what may always remain a somewhat local matter and may vary from one series of positions to another.

The professional staff of the Bureau of Personnel of the Department

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

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of Public Welfare and the Division of Unemployment Compensation in Indiana, in advance of accepting applications for examinations, worked out a table of acceptable "equivalents" for required training and experience for case reviewer, child welfare worker, field worker (public assistance), and senior medical social worker. Application of the table to individual cases was made by professionally qualified staff and certain types of possibly equivalent training and experience were allowed only upon recommendation of the Joint Committee of the two departments under which the Bureau of Personnel operates. It is noted, however, that the Bureau has never announced the basis of equivalents prior to an examination although the table of equivalents has been available to candidates on request. The table defines professional training in terms of semesters, quarters, and credits. It distinguishes supervised experience from unsupervised experience, allowing more credit for the former. When experience is allowed as a substitute for training, the proviso is made that such experience must have been since 1930 in order to guarantee familiarity with present-day public welfare programs. The table attempts no definition for "accredited" agency, "recognized" school of social work, or "supervised" experience. It is possible that definitions were made for the guidance of the staff, but not included in the table.

GRADING TOTAL BACKGROUND

Assigning Score Value to Background. Most of what has been said hitherto in this chapter relates to problems which arise both in setting entrance requirements and in devising plans for grading education and experience. There are certain further problems which are allied particularly to the latter task.

Assuming that reasonable and realistic entrance requirements have been set for examination for a given position, and that written and oral tests have been given, what considerations must be kept in mind by the social worker who is devising a plan for grading experience and training of candidates or doing the actual grading himself?

Ideally, background should be graded on the basis of evidence yielded by position-analysis checked against evidence yielded by service ratings showing what kind of background has most fre-

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quently been associated with poor and excellent performance. In the absence of service ratings the dependence will have to be on position-analysis.

Methods of Scoring as Affected by Number of Competitors. In the case of important posts for which few competitors are admitted to examination, the background of candidates is often graded on an individual basis. Where the position is of less moment, or where large numbers of candidates are involved, a general scale for scoring experience and training is usually developed, and candidates are measured against that scale. In either event it is important that grading be done, or be supervised, by professionally qualified persons; for even in applying a predetermined scale, questions involving qualitative interpretation of experience and education constantly crop up.

In the case of candidates for strategic positions it is probably desirable that social workers should emphasize the value of grading background on an individual basis. This is especially important because social work is a growing profession in which educational requirements have undergone rapid change, and in which further change is to be anticipated. Where the scale is to be applied to hundreds of candidates, it may be important to give heavy weight to such items as (1) an A.B. degree, (2) one year of professional training in a school that is a member of the American Association of Schools of Social Work, or (3) one year's experience in a large urban public welfare agency since 1932. By weighting background on any such rigid plan for the "key" position, however, the very people with greatest potential value for the job may be put at a disadvantage. Usually in such instances the process is to build up from the position-analysis a conception of what the job needs; with that picture in mind, to give a score to the background of each candidate in terms of added points for each item of education and experience, in proportion to the estimated value of these to the job; and then to compare records and scores of the group of competitors

with each other as a recheck on the soundness of scoring. In other words, in grading background of candidates for "key" positions, each competitor is scored against an ideal and also graded against the others. This does not imply that the background of one individual is picked as the ideal, and others scored against it. It means that a fine adjustment of values is kept as between the ideal and what is offered by the competing group. If the scoring plan were to be built around the experience of a single person who seemed ideal for the position, the end result might be far from desirable. "What about Mr. ——? He's an ideal person for this job. Let's take him as a criterion, or fix the scoring plan so that we get people like him at the top." Mr. —— may be an ideal person for the job, not because he has a particular background, but because he has a high degree of intelligence, marked diplomacy, or some other asset which does not necessarily derive from his education or experience. The other parts of the examination are designed to weight these other "plus" values; the grading of elements in background is done for a different purpose. To apply the criterion of Mr. ——'s background to other candidates may result, when considered in terms of quality of the certifiable group, in a fiasco.

When the background of candidates is scored in a more wholesale way because of their numbers, it is almost imperative to use a table or scale on which various kinds of experience and education are weighted. While again the evidence on function brought out by position-analysis should be the starting point in building such a table, some consideration may need to be given to what the total group offers.

If the examination is the first one for a given department, or if shifts of personnel in large numbers are likely to result, there will certainly be a temptation to modify the conception of position-analysis as the foundation for a grading scale, in order to bring other considerations into focus—for example, the effect a proposed grading plan may have on the future public welfare program, in

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terms of its tendency to shift special groups up or down on the eligible list. Three examples will illustrate this point:

1. Examiners and their advisers in a certain state are faced with the task of building a scale for scoring background for the whole field staff of the state department of public welfare. The present field staff, which is competing, is obviously not well qualified. If there are residence requirements, only citizens of the state can compete. If statewide field experience in public welfare, obviously the most direct experience preparation for the position, be given a heavy weighting, the present inadequate field staff will tend to float on that fact to the top of the eligible list. One may perhaps understand the examiners' desire to scan the education of the group in order to determine whether a heavy weighting on professional education as opposed to experience will offset this tendency; or to emphasize statewide experience of a wider variety of agencies rather than statewide public welfare experience in order to dilute the group with a sprinkling of personnel from agencies in the private field. They may raise the question of crediting metropolitan public welfare experience on an equal level with state public welfare experience so as to draw in on an equal basis some candidates from a well-staffed city public welfare department in the state.

2. The social work staff of a large city institution having most inadequate personnel and poor leadership has competed for positions in the public welfare department. For reasons of expediency it may be thought wise to consider their experience acceptable background for the position in question. The examiners and their advisers will be tempted, at least, to consider how they can weight education versus experience, or with how heavy a weighting they can favor the professionally trained groups so as to lessen the advantage which otherwise would accrue to the group with poor but accredited experience.

3. An examination for state field staff is open to the well-trained and capable supervisory staff of a large metropolitan public agency in which special racial or religious groups predominate. Different racial or religious groups predominate in the down-state rural sections. If there is likelihood that the former urban staff will greatly outdo the former state staff in the written test, the temptation may be to correct this situation by weighting statewide or rural experience beyond the point indicated by theoretical needs of the position so as to achieve some balance of city and state groups in the eligible list.

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There is no intent to pass judgment here upon how much, if indeed at all, a scale for grading background may justifiably be molded to the exigencies of a given situation. Two points only are noted: theoretically, in the absence of established correlations between background and performance, the demands of the position rather than the equipment of the group should determine the grading plan, except so far as it may be legitimate to adjust severity of the examination as a whole to the number of appointments to be made. The "reality situation," however, often results in giving some consideration to the background of the competing group as a factor in devising a scale for grading.

Constructing a Scoring Scale. Social workers who are asked to devise plans for grading training and experience may find suggestions on form more useful than general observations and cautions. Therefore, there is included below a copy of tables for scoring the education and experience of Visitors, Grade I, as developed by the Personnel Office of the Department of Social Security, State of Washington. Only such changes have been made as will render them understandable without the word-of-mouth interpretation which was given raters at the time of using. The tables are offered as suggestions on form alone. The groups into which different classes of experience are thrown; weights assigned to years of education, years of experience, and academic degrees; credit set for certain kinds of experience or maximum years of experience of any type assigned credit—all these and many other points must be determined in each jurisdiction and for each class of positions in terms of position-requirements and local needs and pressures. Scales of this type, however, have been used with success by several civil service agencies; they are a convenient means of measuring comparative values.

In scoring background according to the Washington scale, each candidate's total equipment as listed on his application is considered in two parts: his total education and his total experience. The following table is for scoring education only.

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TABLE 5.—SCALE OF CREDITS FOR SCORING EDUCATION OF APPLICANTS FOR POSITION OF VISITOR, GRADE I, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY, STATE OF WASHINGTON, 1937

Types of education	Credits for education by number of years						Additional credit for each college or graduate degree or R.N. certificate
	6 mos.	1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	
High school ^a	Less than 1 yr. -40	-30	-20	-10	..	..	..
Business college	5	10	15	..	..	..	..
University extension Correspondence school	..	5	10	..	..	..	..
Nurses' training (Hospital)	15	25	30	45	..	..	10
College, Major in: Education Bus. Ad. Home Ec. Science etc.	..	20	30	45	60	70	5
College, Major in: Sociology Psychology Nursing	..	25	40	60	80	90	5
Graduate school of social work	..	45	..	..	..	..	..

^a Subtract 10 points for every year of high school not completed.

According to the values assigned education in this table, the candidate is given cumulative credits for each year of education beyond high school. If he has not completed high school, 10 points are deducted for each complete year of high school education which he lacks. If he has completed college, one year of graduate work, or nurse's training, but does not have the degree appropriate to that level, he is given 5 fewer points than if he had the degree. No credit is given for more than one year of graduate work, presumably on the supposition that

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graduate training beyond one year is of no particular value in the visitor's job.

As examples of how the scale works out, a graduate of a two-year business course who had had 3 years of high school work would receive an educational score of 5; the young woman who had had one year of hospital training plus four years of college with an A.B. degree in science would receive an educational score of 90; the college graduate with a major in sociology and one year of graduate training in social work would receive 130 educational credits. Presumably, the table was accompanied by definitions of what a year of education equals in terms of academic credits and what is included in the term "major."

The table below for scoring experience is more complicated since it attempts to evaluate combinations of experience as well as single items.

TABLE 6.—SCALE OF CREDITS FOR SCORING EXPERIENCE OF APPLICANTS FOR POSITION OF VISITOR, GRADE I, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY, STATE OF WASHINGTON, 1937

Types of experience	Years of experience (Figures in lower left of each box in bold-faced type designate credits to be allowed for basic experience—see text. Figures in upper right of each box designate credits to be allowed for supplementary experience—see text.)				
	6 months	1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years
A. Identical	55 20	80 35	100 45	115 50	125 55
B. Allied	30 10	50 20	65 30	75 35	80 40
C. Semi-allied	20 5	30 10	40 15	45 20	50 25
D. Qualifying	15 ..	20 5	25 10	30 15	.. ..
E. Semi-qualifying	5 ..	10 ..	15 5	.. ..	.. ..

(Five points additional to be allowed for each year of identical experience up to 15 years.)
(Five points additional to be allowed for each year of allied experience up to 10 years. Maximum allowed for any combination of semi-allied, qualifying, and semi-qualifying experience 50 credits.)

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A glance at the table above shows that experience of each candidate is assigned weights in accordance both with its length and with the degree of its relativity to the job. The latter is indicated by dividing experience, in the left-hand column, into that which is "Identical, Allied, Semi-allied, Qualifying, and Semi-qualifying."

Across the top of the table, experience in each of these groups is divided according to length, no experience of less than six months or more than fifteen years being credited. (See note below Table 6.) A maximum of 50 points is set for any amount of experience in the three most remotely related categories. No more than two years' experience is credited in the least remotely related category, three years in the next, and four years in the semi-allied group.

Each column contains two sets of figures. The one in the lower left-hand corner of each box in bold-faced type is the score for that class of experience when it is considered "basic." The figure in lighter type in the upper right-hand corner of each box is the score for the same class of experience when it is considered "supplemental." In scoring the experience of any candidate, that block of experience is considered first for which he would get most credit according to the scale. Such experience is given credit figured on the "basic" score. Other experience credited in addition is figured on the "supplemental" score. According to this table, if a young woman had been a visitor in the public department or a private agency for two years (identical experience) and an assistant administrative secretary in the Young Women's Christian Association for two years (allied experience) she would receive 100 points for the former and 30 for the latter. If a candidate had been a remedial teacher for three years (allied experience) and a visitor for six months (identical experience) he would receive 75 and 20 credits respectively. If a candidate had been an information clerk for two years (semi-allied), a claim agent for two years (qualifying) and a mail clerk (semi-qualifying) for two years, he would receive 40, 10, and 5 credits respectively, except that since a maximum of 50 credits is allowed in these three categories, the total experience score is dropped by five points to 50.

These scales raise some interesting questions and apparently show influence of local pressures of one kind or another. For example: For a visitor's job, is college education more valuable with a major in psychology than with a major in home economics, as the table indicates? Is all training in a graduate school of social work,

regardless of its vintage, of equal value for this position? Is one person's high school education and fifteen years' case-work experience in one position (totaling 180 points) worth more, as the scale would indicate, than another's college degree in education, year of graduate social work training, and six months' visitor's experience (totaling 165 points)?

Problems in Using a Scoring Scale. Forming a scale for grading experience and assigning such weights to general categories of experience as will register their relative importance as preparation for a specific position is one problem. Equally important is the allocation of types of experience to those categories. To make such allocation valid, not only must the position for which the examination is given be understood, but the content must be known of the countless social work and non-social work jobs which may be cited in the background of candidates. Allocation of experience must be in proportion to the importance of various types to the position concerned; it is usually made on the basis of the kind of work involved rather than on its quality, although when social work experience, or other directly related experience is to be given a heavy weighting, the element of quality is sometimes considered as well. Various perplexing problems of evaluation arise here. For example: Is all social work experience, beyond that required for entrance to examinations, of equal value as preparation for a visitor's position? Is case-work experience of more value than group work? Is case work in public welfare of more value than case work in private family or children's agencies? Is case work done under the auspices of public or private family agencies more valuable than case work done in connection with a settlement? Is the attendance officer in the school to be considered a case worker? Is the work of policewoman a case-work or a police job? Is volunteer experience in a high-standard agency worth more, or less, than paid experience in a sub-standard agency? The soundness of the answers finally arrived at may depend on the number of applications to be graded, the qualifications of people doing the grading, the nature of avail-

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able information, importance of positions involved, willingness of the civil service agency to accept social work judgment on such matters, willingness of the social work group to attack the problem, and similar considerations.

To devise a grading plan that will take care of these and other related considerations and not work hardships on individuals is difficult. In this, as in all test procedures affecting large numbers, the best that social work advisers can do in relation to any single examination is to devise a plan that will be sound in its general principles, provide for technical advice and skill in application to individual cases, and beyond that "let the chips fall where they may."

SUMMARY: THE CHALLENGE TO SOCIAL WORK

Out of the foregoing discussion the two facts emerge that civil service agencies need the help of social work in arriving at any objective criteria of measurement before entrance requirements can be set or background be scored, and that social work needs to do further careful and comprehensive research in order to give that help. Such a research program could be based on material from at least three sources: first, careful and continued recording, by those who are in the field and have day-to-day opportunity to check practice against theory, of those factors making for success and failure in the performance of individuals and agencies, and the relation of these to previous training and experience; second, the more formal and directed analyses of positions, of curricula, and of agency programs, to determine their nature, quality, and degree of interrelationship; and third, a collection of the studies and data on standards and criteria which have been made in the past for special purposes but which have never been scanned to determine their value to examining agencies. To collect this material from all three sources, correlate and amplify it, and translate the essence of the whole into form and language which is relatively standardized and substantiated, is fundamental to making any major improvement in methods of selection of public welfare personnel. Without the

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results of such analysis and definition, conclusions on entrance requirements or on plans for grading background are likely to be either opportunistic or wishful in character, and certainly unstandardized and hard to defend. While the immediate objective of such a task is to improve the civil service processes, the task itself must be carried through by social work.

Civil service agencies using social work advisers are constantly expressing the need for guidance in these processes of research. So far the response has come from isolated groups working only in relation to local needs. Since civil service is being rapidly extended to public welfare positions and the field of public welfare itself is in the process of evolution, any useful research in relation to standards will need to have an immediate beginning, continuity, and a far horizon. The time would seem ripe for co-ordinated effort in this direction from the profession.

In the meantime, "What shall we do to be saved?" Every examination announcement does imply some standard of measurement for both training and experience, and people are rapidly being judged by these standards. Perhaps two birds might be killed with one stone by inducing civil service agencies to specify that, in order to be credited, training and experience must have been in agencies which are "professionally acceptable," leaving interpretation of that phrase to a representative professional group in each community and in relation to each position. To be sure, that puts great responsibility in the hands of a small group in each jurisdiction, and results will not be uniform, but such an empirical method may be safer in the present state of flux than setting more rigid and general standards. At the same time, such a method would have the considerable advantage of building up through the country a substantial body of decisions in relation to individual positions, together with the thinking on which the decisions are based—a useful start for the research project just suggested.

At the risk of undue repetition, let us end this chapter on the same note which it has frequently struck throughout.

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While written and oral tests loom large in the eyes of those social workers who participate in them as candidates or advisers, entrance requirements and the grading of background together may have as much or more effect on the destinies of candidates. Entrance requirements not only determine who can compete for public welfare positions but also influence public recognition of the professional character of social work. A plan for scoring background may practically determine the nature of appointments to the more strategic public welfare positions. The problems in relation to each of these are professional rather than technical. Social work is repeatedly being asked by examining agencies to analyze function, content, and criteria, and to simplify and standardize the terminology of all these, to the end that entrance requirements and systems of scoring background may carry out their respective and intended functions.

For all these reasons, then, the profession of social work has a heavy responsibility to make some co-ordinated effort to solve the problems inherent in these parts of the examining process. While the material assembled and the conclusions drawn should be focused on the needs of civil service agencies, they will have almost equal value for those in training schools, agencies, and professional associations who are concerned with defining standards of equipment and performance.

CHAPTER XXI

DRAFTING WRITTEN TESTS

IT HAS already been stressed in these pages that the value of a civil service examination depends upon the degree and the consistency with which success in the examination foretells success in the position. Predictions of success or failure depend for accuracy both on knowledge of what elements are most often associated with competence in the position and on success in selecting and framing ways of measuring those elements.

PLANNING THE STRUCTURE OF WRITTEN TESTS

Success in constructing the written tests, with which this chapter deals, depends, then, on the competence of the test technician in planning and framing items that will measure the elements to be tested, and of the expert in the field concerned, who advises on the selection of those elements. Obviously, two different kinds of expertness are needed, expertness in the technique of testing and expertness in the subject matter of the position. These are not likely to be combined in one person. Pseudo-expertness in respect to either quality is dangerous to the product.

There may be situations, however, in which the social worker is called upon to devise in its entirety a written examination for a public welfare position; to take responsibility for planning and framing measures of competence as well as for selection of subject matter. This situation is likely to occur only when the examining agency has no technical staff, and in such an event the social worker will need to seek the advice of a qualified psychometrist while building his test and before subjecting candidates to his written examination.

Because it is a problem that must be contemplated from the outset of his undertaking, the social worker will also wish to discuss

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with the examining agency what provision it will make, or will allow him to make, for checking in practice the reliability and validity of his test before it is given to candidates. It is customary to "try out" individual items¹ before the test as a whole is constructed, in order to determine the value of these items in terms of their power to differentiate between the better and the poorer candidates;² also in order that the time allowance necessary for each item, the relative difficulty of items, and the soundness with which they have been prepared both as to content and form, may be judged in advance. This is usually done either by submitting a large group of items to several competent individuals, asking them to comment on each item in relation to these points; or by submitting all the items, as for examination, to a group whose efficiency is known and who represent several levels of performance in the position. In the latter case each item is timed for each person and subsequent decisions about choice and arrangement of items and time allowance are made on the basis of the scores achieved and the time used by the better and the poorer competitors. This latter method of validation is sometimes impossible, either because the examining agency fears "leakage" of information, or because no "try-out" group is available whose relative efficiency is known.

When a tentative written test is finally constructed from those items which remain after such preliminary testing, it is usually thought advisable to arrange a similar "try-out" for the projected final test as a whole. This is perhaps particularly desirable in "built up" examinations in which all candidates for a hierarchy of positions in a single series begin with a basic written test, to which is added a harder test section for each higher position. The chief difficulty in constructing such a "built up" test lies in correctly graduating the difficulty of succeeding sections. A comparison of scores made by judges in such "preliminaries" as have been de-

¹ As previously stated, the term "item" is used by test experts to denote the separate questions propounded or tasks set in an examination.

² See p. 146 and footnote one; also pp. 327-328.

scribed will often disclose unevenness in the progression that can be corrected before the test is given to bona fide candidates.

Another way of making a rough appraisal of the relative difficulty of items is to submit each on a separate card to a number of competent judges, asking each to sort them into a given number of piles, on the basis of their difficulty.

Choice of Subjects. To facilitate visualizing the total problem of constructing written examinations, let it be assumed for purposes of this discussion that the social worker is faced with the necessity of preparing a written test in its entirety (although as previously noted such a situation fortunately will rarely arise). He has first to determine for what subject matter and abilities he is testing, and next what media are best suited to his purpose. He studies the analysis of the position to see what the employe has to do in day-to-day routine. He decides what knowledge and abilities the employe must possess to carry out these functions adequately. He decides also the relative importance of the several areas of knowledge and ability to be tested, allotting space and time to questions on each subject so as to reflect its importance to the position. If he fails to achieve both quantitative and qualitative relationships between his questions and the content of the position, the examination may fall short of validity, no matter how excellent the character of the individual questions, since in this event performance in the examination may not consistently show a correlation with performance in the position.

For example, if in an examination for medical social worker in a public department, too many questions are devoted to testing knowledge of diseases and medical terminology and too few to knowledge of case work, in proportion to importance of the two subjects to the job, the examination will tend to raise to the top of the list those who are familiar with diseases and medical terms, but who are not necessarily case workers. Assuming that they passed entrance requirements, one can imagine such an examination yielding an eligible list on which doctors' wives and doctors' secretaries ranked far above skilled case workers. It is conceivable, but not probable, that doctors' wives and secretaries

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would function adequately in the position because of their background, or because they had assets beyond those tested, which made them valuable. The latter possibility is not to be considered by those who construct questions, however. Those "plus" values which any candidate may possess are to be rated elsewhere if at all.

Suppose a written examination, including both essay and short answer questions, is to be devised for the position of medical social worker with consultant responsibilities in a public welfare department. As the social work adviser lists knowledge and abilities apposite to the position, his working sheet may look somewhat like this:¹

Knowledge necessary:

- Case-work principles
- Supervisory techniques
- Physical disabilities
- Relationship between environment and disease
- Public welfare organization
- Field of social work
- Social and economic trends, general and local
- Public health organization
- Medical terminology
- Social implications of illness

Qualities necessary:

Intelligence	{	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to grasp complicated ideas Ability to relate parts to whole Ability to follow instructions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skill in dealing with people Skill in imparting knowledge Ability to organize and express ideas Ability to work quickly Poise Sense of social values Interest in self-development Judgment 		

Choice of Qualities to Be Tested. The social worker knows that he can test knowledge by written questions. He would like to test skills, but realizes that they can be tested only in performance. It is obviously impossible to duplicate in a written examination any performance involving human relationships and personal behavior, although one may test knowledge of conventional and accepted ways of conducting oneself, if there is agreement on what is "accepted." He therefore decides that measurement of *skill in deal-*

¹ For a fictitious position a relevant and complete list can only be approximated, and for this reason, the list submitted is intended to be merely suggestive.

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ing with people, skill in imparting knowledge, and poise must be left to some other test procedure, presumably to the oral examination, if indeed such qualities are to be included at all. *Intelligence, ability to organize and express ideas, and ability to work quickly* are skills for which he thinks written questions constitute performance tests. He therefore includes those in his program for the written test. He also includes *a sense of social values*, but with some reservation, being uncertain whether the candidate's replies will bring out his actual convictions about social values, or merely reflect the views he believes are held by those who are to score the replies. *Interest in self-development* he may include or leave to the oral examination. He might, for example, learn from the written test the degree to which candidates are conversant with the subject matter of recent professional books and periodicals, and to that extent measure their interest in self-development; but that and similar criteria are inadequate yardsticks.

Choice of Test Forms: Essay or Short Answer. Having decided what qualities the job requires, and on which of those qualities light can be thrown by means of a written test, the social worker must then decide whether he is to use essay or short answer items exclusively or a combination, and if the latter is the case, which topics can best be covered by essay, and which by short answer items. Setting aside, for the moment, the arguments on the relative merits of these, let us assume that for reasons beyond his control it has been established that he is to use both types of items.

The social worker who has not experimented thoroughly with short answer items, particularly those of the multiple choice type, may set too narrow limits to the scope of the short answer form. Trying each item in both forms may yield surprising evidence as to the adaptability of the short answer test to a variety of uses.

It seems apparent that all the qualifications tabulated above which involve knowledge of subject matter, as well as those embraced under the term *intelligence*, and perhaps also *sense of social values* and *interest in self-development*, if these latter are to be in-

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cluded, can be tested by short answer items. *Ability to work quickly* will be tested by the examination as a whole provided a time limit is set. This leaves on our list to be settled only the method for testing *ability to organize and express ideas*, and *judgment*. If the first of these is to be tested at all, the essay question seems to offer a readier vehicle since the essence of the short answer item is that it produces a response in the form of a single word or choice; although it is no doubt possible that a series of short answer items might be so constructed as to achieve the same result.

How best to test *judgment* is one of the subjects argued among experts. Judgment may be defined as the capacity to analyze a given situation, to bring to bear on it the illumination of past experience in related situations, and, without the intrusion of emotional bias, to draw conclusions which are sound as measured by the opinion of recognized authority. In other words, arriving at a judgment means going through a complicated process, the soundness of which largely determines the soundness of the judgment. Some believe that in order to measure judgment, except on an elementary level, one must evaluate not only the answer to a posed question, but also the process that led to the answer—which belief would imply that judgment also can be better tested by the essay form. It is possible that a series of carefully constructed and related multiple choice items could yield the same kind of evidence on power to reason and soundness of deduction as is yielded by an essay item, but certainly to build such a series is no easy task.

It is neither intended to suggest that because most topics can be covered by short answer questions that form should necessarily be used, nor that because an essay question may yield evidence on a point, the difficulties in scoring that evidence should be ignored. As noted previously, many considerations enter into decision on what form is best used in any given examination.¹

Measuring Relative Importance of Elements to Be Tested. Cer-

¹ See pp. 127-135, 143-151.

tain considerations which must be faced in building a test are treated here because they must be borne in mind throughout the discussion of content and form of any test.

After deciding which fields of knowledge or what qualities are pertinent to the position, and what form of examination is best suited to test them, the next problem is to determine, again in terms of the position-analysis, the relative importance to the position of elements—subjects, or qualities—selected for testing. Decision on this point affects the amount of examination time allotted to each general subject, and therefore the nature and number of items assigned to each. The test expert can estimate with surprising accuracy how much time it is reasonable to allow for completion of a given series of items. In figuring how many short answer items to allow to the minute, more time is usually allotted to those of the multiple choice type than to those involving simple recall. Short answer tests are often and deliberately so constructed that only the most alert and efficient candidates can complete the total.¹ The test technician's judgment on the time element, combined with the social worker's judgment on the desirable distribution of questions between topics, should result in a test that can be completed within time limits, at least by superior candidates, and will reflect the various elements in the position in their true proportion. One word of caution is necessary here, particularly in relation to short answer items. The test expert realizes that the best way for a candidate to get a good score on a short answer test is to run through questions rapidly, reading accurately but trusting largely to first impulses in answering. He knows also that public welfare employes are likely to have to work under pressure. Being a mentally alert and efficient person himself, he may rate the qualities of alertness and efficiency highly. These three factors combine in some cases to influence him to emphasize length to the extent that the test in fact becomes an endurance race. No one knows, however, whether ability to meet pressure of time on a short answer test is any meas-

¹ See pp. 139-140.

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ure of ability to meet pressures that will occur in the position. Therefore, while capacity to finish a task in a reasonable time should be one ability tested, "reasonable time," for short answer examinations especially, is a factor to be carefully considered from several points of view, in order that speed be not given undue weight.

It is unnecessary to make repeated tests in a single examination of any one isolable quality or knowledge of any detailed fact. If such quality or knowledge of fact is particularly essential as a measure of probable competence in the position, the issue can be met by weighting the factor heavily in the score. Also, since a single test item can test more than one factor, it may not be necessary to include questions on every topic listed. For example, an essay item may be designed to determine a candidate's ability to present a well-organized and thoughtful response. In so doing it may also test knowledge of subject matter. The same subject matter need not, then, be covered in another problem. Since every essay item will test skill in constructing a response, if many are employed care must be taken to see that this capacity is not given undue importance in scoring.

CONSIDERATIONS APPLYING TO BOTH ESSAY AND SHORT ANSWER ITEMS

Although some problems in writing test items are created by and are peculiar to the type of question used, other considerations are common to constructing both essay and short answer items.

Purpose of the Item. In writing single items, as in planning a written examination as a whole, it is necessary first to be sure what knowledge or capacities are to be tested by a given question. Study of examination questions and their titles indicates that there is many a slip in this respect between purpose and accomplishment. Complicated questions are devised which obviously test something; what they actually test may bear little relation to what they are intended to test, and therefore perhaps also to any capacity needed in

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the position. This is more likely to be true of items designed to test abilities than knowledge.

One kind of item, entitled "Ability to Follow Directions," has traveled from coast to coast. In the item, only parts of which are here quoted, a tabulation is given of data concerning the service records of some 25 or 30 imaginary employes. Several facts are noted about each employe as follows:

Badge number	Title	Employment	Monthly salary	Mos. in service	Days absent	Service rating	Years in school	Age
1	laborer	perm.	155	97	0	95%	8	53
2	inspector	temp.	200	14	4	86%	13	29
3	helper	temp.	145	3	3	80%	9	22

A series of twenty problems follows the tabulation, in which the candidate is to supply certain information drawn from the data given, by placing the badge numbers of all employes who fit the requirements of each of the twenty questions in a space provided for each question. The problem increases steadily in difficulty from the first to the last question. The first item runs something like this:

"1.—The chief engineer is number ——."

An item about midway reads, "11.—The employe receiving more than \$175, who has been less than 28 months in service, and who has been absent the greatest number of days is number ——."

The last item of the series, number 20, asks for the badge number of "Each employe who has been absent more than 1 day, who has a service rating 81% or over, who is more than 27 years of age, who has been 3 years or less in service, who receives over \$200, and who is temporarily employed."

This series of questions clearly involves a difficult mental exercise. *Ability to understand written instructions* is certainly one thing which it tests. Beyond that, however, it would seem that the item tests for accuracy in reading; capacity to see and to hold in mind spatial relationships in a double entry table; ability to devise quickly an efficient system for recording and checking against one another each series of facts called for in each item; capacity to concentrate and not to be upset by a difficult problem in strange form—and many similar abilities. It seems easy to *understand written instructions* in this problem. To carry them out accurately in the shortest time is difficult. Yet according to the title, the item was planned to test the former ability. The intrusion of other

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factors may result in a gap between purpose and accomplishment. This does not imply that the item is not a good one in itself. It may be excellent, but if it does not test primarily what it is designed to test, this fact may damage the validity of the examination as a whole.

The Selective Power of the Item. In building a written test the technician may occasionally wish to eliminate altogether certain items suggested by subject experts, although they seem entirely correct in form and content, because he does not think they will prove useful in differentiating between better and less qualified candidates. The social work adviser may be puzzled by his reasoning. Test technicians try to include in a test only those items which they think more of the abler candidates will answer correctly and more of the less able will answer incorrectly. The examiner's basis for making a priori judgments upon the value of individual items as tools for differentiation is his past experience in making "item evaluations."

An "item evaluation" is the process of determining what kind of correlation exists between the scores recorded for each item in a written examination and the scores recorded for the test as a whole. Its purpose is to isolate, for possible elimination from the final scoring plan, those items from which the scores show no correlation, or a negative correlation, with scores for the total test.

The examiner wishes to score only those items in relation to which this correlation is positive and significant because he knows, first, that an examination has value as a measure of competence only if those candidates who are the most able achieve in it a high score; and second, because the higher the proportion of items it contains which are answered correctly by the more able and incorrectly by the less able, the greater will be the degree to which the test as a whole results in the arrangement of candidates on the eligible list in their actual order of merit for the position.

The rather sweeping assumption is made at the outset of an item evaluation that performance on the total test is some measure of individual competence. Lacking an external and better established measure, the technician assumes the validity of the whole in order to test the effectiveness of a part.

When proceeding on this assumption, he has determined for each

item how many of those who answered correctly and incorrectly had high and low scores respectively on the total examination, he may decide to eliminate three groups of items from those to be included in final scoring: (1) those which either all or no candidates answered correctly, or which all or none answered incorrectly or not at all; (2) those which an approximately equal number of candidates with high and low scores on the total examination answered correctly; and (3) those which more candidates with a high score for the total test answered incorrectly, and more with a low score for the total answered correctly. (These last are termed "inversion items.") The reason for eliminating the first group is that scores for those items will have no effect on the relative rank of candidates since they will affect the total scores of the whole group equally. The reason for eliminating the last two groups is that it is believed that the narrow difference in fractional score points which may determine whether one candidate or another is appointed should not depend on the correctness of response to those items from which the scores show either no correlation, or a negative correlation with the scores from performance on the total test.

If items falling in those three groups are eliminated, only those remain which a greater number of candidates having high total scores answered correctly and a greater number of candidates having low total scores answered incorrectly.

Few examining agencies can go to the expense of making an item evaluation after each examination. Some of them make such analyses from time to time as a guide to improving the quality of future tests; others go through this process before arriving at a final scoring plan in relation to any examination of which they doubt the validity.

When, therefore, the examiner discards a suggested item as "useless because it will not differentiate," he is making a guess which he hopes will improve the selective power of his examination. Since his guesswork is based on the results of past analysis of the capacity of similar items to achieve this end, his judgment should have weight.

Protecting the Candidate from Avoidable Errors. The designer of the written examination next considers ways of keeping the candidate from misunderstandings or mechanical errors that may make serious differences in his score.

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The objective of modern civil service examinations is to produce an eligible list in which the better qualified people are at the top in an order approximating their competence. The civil service examiner may be said to be less concerned with weeding out the unfit, except for considerations of cost, than with pushing upward the superior candidates.¹ He therefore is careful to construct his examinations in such a way, and to write his instructions to candidates in such crystal-clear language, that emphasis of the examination will be on testing general ability rather than the knack of figuring out what the examiner intended, or the capacity to read without skipping a word. This has not always been the practice of examining agencies. Over-heavy deductions from total score for errors, failure to protect the candidate from the results of his haste, have been characteristic of certain examinations. Present procedure recognizes that, while accuracy is important in any position, a single slip in reading should not disqualify an otherwise qualified individual; that pressure of time is an element in all examinations; and that haste may explain, if not justify, a modicum of carelessness. Examiners have learned from analysis of results of examinations that certain elementary but important precautions can be thrown around a written examination to protect candidates against almost accidental "score losses" which are heavier than the seriousness of the error would seem to justify. Citing some of them will serve to show the scrupulous care with which written tests must be handled.

The mistakes made by competitors in written examinations fall into certain stock patterns. Candidates turn over two pages of questions instead of one; they fail to note that a paragraph or section carries over to a concluding page (or section); they answer all questions instead of complying with the directions to "choose three out of five"; or they fail to notice such qualifying words as *always*,

¹ Except in jurisdictions in which veterans are given a large "score preference" or in which incumbents who achieve a place on the eligible list may be preferred regardless of their order of rank.

generally, never, most often, which directly affect the correctness of answers.

Some of the measures commonly taken by test technicians to protect candidates against such errors are as follows:

All items are numbered consecutively from beginning to end of the whole, and candidates are warned to watch sequence of numbers.

The statement, *Do not stop here; go on to the next page*, may be put at the bottom of all but the last page.

Candidates may be warned in instructions to watch for qualifying terms.

The following caution on the instruction sheet of examinations for public welfare positions, used in Arkansas before the repeal of the state's civil service law, may have saved many a wrong answer: "Read over every word of the item carefully before answering it, and pay particular attention to such words as 'generally' or 'usually' and 'seldom' or 'rarely,' etc., referring to common practice or customary procedure." Perhaps a better way of insuring that the candidate notes such key words is to underline or italicize them. When some such precaution is not taken the mortality on a given item may be out of all proportion to the inherent difficulty of the subject matter.

The following item in a recent supervisory examination was subject to much criticism:

When an administrator decides about a new form for use in a public relief agency, it is always essential to

- (a) compare it with other forms in use in other types of agencies
- (b) determine what purpose is to be served
- (c) estimate its statistical value
- (d) harmonize it with state and federal forms.

Answer (b) is, of course, the key answer. Item (d) was checked by many candidates who apparently neglected to note the word "always" in the item. Some forms are purely local and do

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not have to be harmonized with any other. Underlining "always" might have saved many an error on this point.

The candidate's understanding of the purpose of items as well as of the written test as a whole can be aided by grouping items under headings that give some general idea of what they are supposed to test.

For example, it may be thought advisable in an examination for child welfare workers to include questions to test knowledge of related fields with which the case worker concerned with children will need some familiarity, as: progressive education, public health organization, probation, nutrition, and hygiene. The examiners' purpose in including such questions would be better understood were they grouped under a heading such as "Questions Relating to Allied Fields." Grouping questions similarly under headings like "Office Management," "Ability to Follow Written Instructions," "Legal Phases," may clarify the examiners' intent and explain to the candidate the purpose of each item. Once he sees the connection, he may waste less time in orienting himself to the problem. While the decision whether or not to group questions under general headings rests with the test expert, there would seem to be no reason why they should not be grouped as they are submitted by the social work adviser.

Not only should instructions for the test as a whole be clear and unequivocal, and groupings of items seem logical, but directions for each item should be clear and simple. When a candidate has read general instructions for the test as a whole, noted the make-up of the whole, and read instructions for a particular item, there should be no doubt in his mind as to what he is to consider in making his response, exactly how he is to record his response, and on what he will be scored; he should also have some idea of the relation of single items to the whole.

It is self-evident that every test item should also be so written that it is easily understandable to all admitted to a given examination. No one should have to guess what the examiner meant. Yet this apparently primary consideration is often violated in practice.

Many test items may seem clear to the examiner, yet mean little to the candidate.

For example, take the following true-false item: "Continuous immediate supervision is the earmark of good organization." The candidate might be pardoned for some confusion as to its meaning.

Or this essay item: "What is the best means of communication for case-work purposes?" The writer has puzzled for hours over this item but still prefers to avoid a categorical response.

If requirements for an examination are not of a technical nature then it does not seem defensible to pose technical problems in technical terminology. If entrance requirements limit competition, however, to a small group of technically trained persons, it would be admissible to use terminology with which only that group can be assumed to be familiar. Whether properly or not, most public welfare examinations for positions of visitor make no hard and fast entrance requirements of technical training. In framing an examination for such positions, purely technical questions or terminology ought, therefore, to be avoided.

In a recent examination for a series of personnel positions in a state department of public assistance for which entrance requirements were very general, the following item was included:

A "continuance rate" in personnel work is:

- (1) the difference between the accession rate and separation rate
- (2) the percentage of employes during any given period who were hired at any given previous period
- (3) the percentage of employes hired during a given period who are still with the concern at a given later period
- (4) the accession rate divided by the separation rate
- (5) the separation rate divided by the accession rate.

Candidates complained that this item was too technical. Critics supported their position by proving that the answer is not readily found in textbooks on personnel. The item was not scored, in recognition of the justice of the criticism.

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Social workers, as well as other technical groups, are sometimes thought to be wont to use ordinary words in a special sense. If an examination is not addressed to a technical group, these special uses of ordinary words should be avoided as well as terminology which is technical in essence.

For example, the word *identify* is in common speech a transitive verb. An intransitive use with special meaning has been borrowed from psychiatry, as in the following:

Write 50 words on the subject: "Does a case worker's tendency to identify with her client necessarily result in poor case work?"

Thus used, the word *identify* may not be understood by the ordinary candidate.

The words *accept* or *reject*, which in common use are synonymous with receive or refuse, have an added connotation of emotional value as used by social workers or psychiatrists. Such a question as the following may not, therefore, be clear to all candidates:

Evidences of a mother's rejection of her child are an indication that the case worker should:

- (1) secure institutional care for the child
- (2) bring court action against the mother
- (3) look for emotional factors that affect the mother's behavior
- (4) refer the mother to a psychiatrist.

Other terms that social workers use frequently in a similarly special sense are:

security—referring to emotional, not financial, security

threaten—meaning to make uncertain or anxious

community resources—referring to supplementary services upon which the case worker may draw, rather than to material resources

the withdrawn person—meaning the shy or introverted person

to condition—meaning to determine or limit the nature of

leadership—meaning a quality rather than a status.

A common cause of misunderstanding by candidates, and there-

fore a source of danger in test items, is the tendency to use without definition a general or vague phrase that may be interpreted in several ways.

Candidates considering the following question are faced with four such cloudy terms which they may interpret as they choose:

A major responsibility of a medical social worker in a Home Relief Office is to:

- (1) determine eligibility of the case for medical care
- (2) review eligibility of the case for medical care
- (3) review eligibility of the case for relief and for medical care
- (4) clear the case in the master index to determine its eligibility status.

In the item above, does the word *major* relate to priority of the task over other duties, to the greater amount of time that should be devoted to it, or to the degree of importance conceded it by the administration?

Does *responsibility* mean having the last word on, doing the most work in connection with, or being charged with seeing that someone else completes, a particular job?

Does *determine* mean investigate or decide?

Does *review* mean look over, check accuracy of, study for some general purpose?

The same problem is raised if the question is phrased in essay form: "Discuss briefly the major responsibility of the medical social worker in a Home Relief Office in relation to reviewing and determining eligibility for medical care."

However, the seriousness of the error is somewhat mitigated if the item is in essay form since in scoring responses one may determine how the candidates interpreted the item and adjust the key accordingly. It is not possible to do this if the item is in short answer form.

Because of the tendency of candidates to overlook or understress words included in test items and again because most items are not primarily designed to test accuracy in reading, it has been found

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advisable to put the important or key word of any item as near the beginning of the problem as possible. If this is not done, a wrong answer may be recorded when the candidate really knows the right one, or a whole essay may even be written on the wrong subject. The following essay question and analysis of the answers of those who failed it give evidence on this point:

The following positions are usually found in the district office of a public relief agency: (a) case supervisor, (b) office manager, (c) resources consultant, (d) employment interviewer.

Establish for each of these positions basic standards of education, training, experience, personal qualities, quality and quantity of work performed, by which to evaluate the person holding the position.

A great many apparently able candidates completely missed the phrase *to evaluate*, which stands near the end of this item, and focused their response on the phrase *basic standards*. As a result, instead of setting up criteria for evaluating personnel, such as would be devised for service ratings, which was what the examiner intended them to do, they set up standard qualifications for personnel such as might be used for employment purposes. Had the second paragraph been worded as follows its meaning would have been clear:

Establish criteria for evaluating persons holding each of these positions with respect to education, training, experience, personal qualities, and with respect to the quality and quantity of work performance of each.

CONSIDERATIONS APPLYING TO ESSAY FORM

Those examiners who approve the use of essay questions do so either for reasons of expediency or because they feel that essay questions, if properly handled, may give evidence on power to discriminate, and to organize, express, and substantiate ideas, which cannot be secured by short answer items. Essay items would seem to be more safely used, then, when subject matter of response

is clearly limited, and the need for attention to organization and form is stressed in the instructions. It is fair to stress the latter in posing an essay problem, however, only if those elements are to be stressed in scoring. The difficulties experienced in securing from examining agencies, for the purposes of this book, an essay item with a key scoring anything but content would seem to indicate that essays are usually scored on content alone with an "over-all" score of 5 or 10 per cent for form occasionally thrown in. If this is true, then the question naturally arises, Why use the essay form at all except for examining small groups where the employment of short answer tests is too expensive?

If essay items are to be used, regardless of the merit of that debatable issue, the person who is to construct questions must build limits for the answer into the question. If he fails to do this, he will have no common denominator for scoring content or treatment. "What is social case work?" and other essay problems nearly as general, are to be found in public welfare examinations from coast to coast. Equally acceptable essays on that question might be written by the person who treats the above topic historically, as conceived by Mary Richmond or Virginia Robinson; psychiatrically, as related to the theories of Rank, Jung, or Freud; practically, as adapted to present-day use in a particular public welfare department; or comparatively, as contrasted with social group work. The results may give evidence on many points that need to be tested; but they certainly will not provide a comparable basis for scoring a number of individuals on knowledge of a given subject.

There are many ways of building limitations into an essay question. One of the easiest but perhaps least satisfactory is to control length of response by the amount of space allowed or by asking for an essay of a given number of words.¹

A less arbitrary and more complete set of limitations may be imposed by indicating the importance of this test item in proportion to the whole in terms of amount of time to be devoted to it and

¹ See Item 1, pp. 137-138.

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by fixing number and nature of points to be developed in the responses, as follows:

"Indicate and discuss what seem to you the three *most important factors* for a supervisor to keep in mind in studying the case load of a worker who consistently fails to keep her work up-to-date. Spend not more than five minutes on this question." Note that in this question not only time allotted and number of points to be covered are indicated; but also that the candidate is both to *indicate* and to *discuss*; that he is to select the *most important factors*; that these factors are to relate particularly to the *case load* of the worker in question, not to the worker's ability.

Another useful way of limiting an essay question is to set up a hypothetical case, or a hypothetical departmental situation, and to ask a series of questions relating to it. In doing this, it is necessary in giving the elements in the situation to strike a balance between brevity and completeness so that candidates will neither be confused by too much detail nor lack information that is essential to an intelligent discussion. This system has not only the advantage of providing a complete common denominator for scoring all responses but makes it possible to set up a battery of questions, each with a different objective, in relation to one subject.

The following essay item, included in a recent supervisor's examination, illustrates this method:

A district office of a public relief agency has a case load of approximately 4500, grouped at present in the following classifications:

1. 10% are unemployable due to permanent health conditions.
2. 15% are unemployable at present due to curable health conditions.
3. 10% are unattached men and women 45 years of age and over.
4. 30% are unskilled laborers with a median age of 30-40 years.
5. 5% are white collar workers.
6. 10% are working for W.P.A. and receiving supplementary home relief.
7. 20% are Union garment workers.

100% Total

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Of the above cases, in the total case load,

8. 5% are carried co-operatively with private agencies.
9. 10% are receiving supplementary A.D.C. allowance.
10. 12% are receiving supplementary O.A.A. allowance.

Discuss this district as follows:

- (a) What specific problems of administration does a district such as this present to the administrator?
- (b) Discuss items 4, 5, and 7 in detail, indicating what further information you would need in order to evaluate the work of the staff on these cases.
- (c) Discuss items 1 and 3 from the point of view of the problems they present to the investigators.

A common misconception exists that essay items must require a long response. It may be more useful and safer to construct an examination of 20 or 30 essay items to which a response of two or three sentences each is required, than an examination limited to two or three items for which extended response is required. The advantages of the former method are that objectives of tests can be better isolated, thus facilitating scoring, and that too much dependence is not placed on reliability of one test item. It is a little dangerous in dealing with material as easily misused as are essay questions to have too many eggs in one basket. Where short responses are called for there is also probably less chance that the candidate will "run away with" the subject, evade the direct issue, or include extraneous material.

A type of essay item often seen asks for a discussion of *relationships* between two sets of facts or theories. Responses to such questions have revealed that they hold a special type of hazard for the candidate. "Relationships" involves connections of all kinds. Candidates often limit discussion to differences. Since the test item is not included to test ability to read, but knowledge of subject matter or of some complex capacity, it would seem better to substitute some such phrase as "likenesses and differences between," or the "interaction" of two sets of facts on each other. If this precaution in wording is not observed, the candidate may re-

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ceive only 50 per cent of the score he might otherwise easily have achieved.

It is advisable to make at least a tentative key for scoring content at the time an essay item is written, not only to facilitate reliable scoring, but to help protect the reliability of the question. A list of possible answers to an essay item may reveal that the question needs further limitation or pointing up; or it may indicate that factors on which scoring is to be based need definition so that the candidate may know where to spend his effort for greatest maximum return.

CONSIDERATIONS APPLYING TO SHORT ANSWER FORM

Social workers have sharply criticized the exclusive use of short answer items in testing for social work positions above the most elementary level. The basis of criticism is that, since social work is not an exact science, but is a field in which the art of participating in human relationships is of major importance, any method of testing is incomplete and faulty that shuts out the opportunity to make qualifying statements to substantiate a choice by indicating the nature of the inductive process through which the choice was reached. The opinion has been voiced by social workers that the better a case worker the poorer will be his score on a short answer test. This may be true when these tests are improperly constructed. There seems little evidence that it is true when they are both reliable and valid. It is easy to sink back on the excuse that the tool is so limited that it cannot be used.

Critics of the short answer test are often in reality critics of all standardized examining techniques. They feel more at home with the interview method of selection; they are oblivious to its hazards. They forget too that any written test is only part of a selective process which begins with recruitment and ends with the decision at the close of the probationary period.

The basis for much criticism of short answer tests for positions of professional character, and particularly for those on a super-

visory level, relates rather to how such tests are used than to their nature. The social worker, along with the representative of other professions, objects to having short answer written examinations used as the first eliminant in a battery of tests. There is weight to their argument that for professional positions the validity of a total test is impaired if that part which tests only factual knowledge is used as the first step in sifting. A system of weighting scores that stresses the importance of oral examination and evaluation of background avails only for the group that survives the written test, and much good material may be lost among those who fail the short answer hurdle. Use of the written test as a first step in sifting is of course resorted to in order to reduce the number of contestants through that part of the test which can be administered most cheaply on a per capita basis. Examining agencies that have to operate on an inadequate budget may be compelled to follow this course, but it is still repugnant to candidates, to department heads, and to other members of the profession affected. Any proposal to change the system in vogue would be more telling if backed up by an evaluation of the number and quality of eligibles who would have been added to a particular list had a different system been used. Modification of the system would, of course, still allow for eliminating from further consideration those whose score from any part of the total examination is so low that perfect scores from other parts would still not raise them above the passing level for the whole examination.

Special Considerations in Testing for Supervisory and Executive Positions. Some social workers concede that short answer examinations are suited to testing for case-work positions but are disturbed about the trend toward their use for supervisory positions. They raise the question, "How far should a supervisor's examination differ from a case worker's?" Various alternatives are possible in testing for supervisory ability. One is to use unassembled examinations.¹ If, however, assembled examinations are to be

¹ See pp. 131-133.

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used, certain emphases in structure or weighting of different parts of the examination may be more effective in making it a valid test for supervisory ability than changes in the nature of the written examination. A professional standard of entrance requirements is probably the first requisite to a valid supervisory examination. Giving heavy weight to the oral test or to evaluation of background, or to both, as compared to the weight given to written tests is another method. A third possibility, as previously indicated, is to eliminate candidates for supervisory positions only on the basis of low final grades rather than on low scores from the written test. It is, of course, possible to use essay items alone or in combination with short answer items. While few examiners are ready to forego entirely the short answer written examination for supervisory positions, by no means all of them would favor a combination of test procedures for supervisory positions in which a major part of the burden of selection was thrown on the short answer written test.

In reference to supervisory positions test technicians seem generally to favor entrance requirements which presuppose professional accomplishment, combined with the customary three-part assembled examination in which a written test of the short answer type is used as a first eliminant, but is not heavily weighted in proportion to oral tests and grading of supplementary background. In the written section of examinations for supervisory positions, examiners favor testing a wider area of knowledge than in examinations for case worker; posing more difficult intellectual problems; and adding tests of those few facts or abilities within the field of social work that are peculiar to supervisory positions and that still do not raise controversial issues. Among these last, for example, might be capacity to grasp the significance of a statistical presentation of a supervisory problem. One can hazard the guess that those new elements of knowledge and ability which are germane to supervisory positions alone and do not lead into questions of human relationships, pertain almost entirely to use of administrative devices for ascertaining what goes on in the district supervised.

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One way of writing an item that is intended to test understanding of, and capacity to use, such administrative devices is to set up a supervisory staff problem in the form of a statistical record and direct to it a series of multiple choice items.

For example, the statement of the district office supervisory problem given in the essay item on pages 337-338 might as well have been followed by a series of multiple choice items as by the three essay items which were called for. It would have been a hard but not an impossible task to frame multiple choice problems to test a candidate's understanding of what the figures indicated and what methods could be acceptably used to deal with the situations that they revealed.

Somewhat similar difficulties are presented in trying to test for administrative ability. In the case of the administrator, however, the body of exact knowledge which pertains particularly to the position is probably larger than in the case of the supervisor. There may also be less controversy about administrative methodology since more of it is concerned with staff management than with staff development.

All of what has been stated in positive form is, of course, open to difference of opinion, and many experienced persons would disagree heartily with the point of view expressed on the limitations and possibilities of written examinations of either type to test for case-work personnel beyond the basic jobs. Certainly, knowledge of the methodology of testing for advanced public welfare positions is still in an elementary stage, and further experimentation is in order.

If one is to experiment with testing knowledge of case work or supervisory practice by short answer items, the multiple choice form seems to offer a more flexible medium than true-false, matching, or completion forms, since it allows for selection of "the better" or "the worse."

The short answer examination is not expected to stand alone as a method of selecting personnel. As part of a battery of tests it has great assets and few liabilities if properly devised and correlated

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with the other processes of selection. The question of how to devise written tests so that they perform their function is of absorbing interest to the best minds in the test field. By analysis of the results of countless examinations they have arrived at the conclusion that certain elementary precautions taken in framing short answer items increase their reliability. A few of these precautions are here grouped under eight general headings:

1. Arrange items in a way that minimizes difficulties for the candidate.
2. Make short answer items both simple and comprehensible.
3. Be sure there is a correct answer, and that there is only one.
4. Minimize the chances of guessing.
5. Don't try to fool the candidate.
6. Keep subject matter related to job.
7. Be sure that knowledge tested is a representative sample of knowledge needed.
8. Avoid indiscriminate borrowing of items from other examinations.

Observing certain simple rules will help to attain these objectives. If the rules are followed by the social worker who has been asked to submit short answer test items, there is less likelihood that examiners will have to make radical changes in the form of the test submitted and therefore that its content will be impaired in the course of revision.

Arrange Items so as to Minimize Difficulties. The short answer examination is familiar to recent graduates of schools and colleges, to persons who read journals that carry information tests, and to those who have had intelligence or aptitude tests in connection with vocational guidance programs. Such persons recognize types of items readily, have met the same kind of instructions before and therefore read them quickly, and are aware that the best way of achieving a good score is to run through items rapidly. The person who meets the short answer problem in a civil service examination for the first time, however, is likely to waste valuable moments in finding out what to do. He either forgets or becomes flustered by

the limitations of time, or he may pause long over a few items at the risk of not finishing the total list. In order not to give an undue "break" to those familiar with this type of test, examiners usually arrange items throughout the tests somewhat in order of increasing difficulty, thus giving the candidate a chance to work into each form by easy stages. This plan may be adopted whether the test follows either of the omnibus¹ patterns or is composed of entirely separate sections.

It is customary to introduce each new form of short answer item with one or more sample problems showing the correct responses correctly recorded to give the candidate opportunity to verify his understanding of how he is to record his response.

When multiple choice items are used, choices are sometimes tabulated in column form rather than run together in a paragraph, thus separating the choices and making it easier to contrast one with another.

If a separate answer sheet is used, and particularly if answers are to be machine-scored, the arrangement of space for answers, and the paper and print to be used are all selected in an effort to minimize confusion and eye strain.

Decision on these matters of arrangement will rarely, if ever, fall to the lot of the social work adviser. If, however, they should, technical advice should be sought from a psychometrist.

Make Items Simple and Comprehensible. Good test procedure favors concise wording of items. Long and complicated sentences test reading ability rather than knowledge of subject matter. It may be important in a particular examination to test reading ability. In that case it is generally conceded to be better practice to introduce one or two questions framed for that purpose rather than to incorporate reading problems in items designed primarily to test knowledge of subject.

Simple and exact terms are necessary to make short answer items understandable. While simplicity and exactness are necessary in

¹ See p. 139.

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all test problems, they are more imperative in items to which the responses must be in the form of a simple word or symbol.

There is an idea in the following test item, but it is too hard to find:

Mark *True* or *False* (T or F) the following: "The success of a good social worker is a matter of the mechanical operations involving complete and satisfactory records."

Unwound from its verbiage this is probably intended to mean "The success of a case worker's efforts depends primarily upon the efficiency with which she keeps her records." The candidate faced with the item as it actually appeared has to lose time unnecessarily in puzzling out the meaning.¹

One of the aids to clarity in a multiple choice item is to keep the choices short, transferring all possible words to the introductory statement. The choices posed to the candidate in the following question do not stand out clearly because of the repetition of phrases.

"Counseling always implies a co-operative working together with a client on a problem which is, after all, his." Which of the following statements does not have the same meaning as the quotation?

- (1) It is the same as helping the client work out his plans for his future.
- (2) It is the same as helping a client to understand and accept his own limitations and plan within them.
- (3) It is the same as helping the client view his problem with perspective.
- (4) It is the same as instructing the client, or telling him where the worker thinks he is wrong.

¹ A. P. Herbert is disturbed by the use of involved language on the part of the politicians. In a recent letter to the London Times, he remarked that if Admiral Nelson were alive now he never would say, "England expects every man to do his duty." The Admiral's statement probably would run something like this: "England anticipates that, as regards the current emergency, personnel will face up to the issues and exercise appropriately the functions allocated to their respective occupation groups."

The item becomes less of a reading problem and less time-consuming if the choices succeed the quotation as follows:

Which of the following has a different meaning from the quotation?

Counseling means helping the client:

- (1) to work out his own plans for his future
- (2) to understand and accept his own limitations and plan within them
- (3) to view his problem with perspective
- (4) to see where he is wrong by instructing him.

It is usually thought desirable from the point of view of clarity that all multiple choice items in a single test present the same number of choices. Four is the number most frequently given, although there is apparently no inherent reason against three or five choices. It is important only that a consistent pattern be followed throughout.

One supervisory examination recently given for a department of public welfare included a series of multiple choice items in response to each of which candidates were asked to indicate the best three responses out of twelve choices. The result was utter confusion, for at least three reasons: the items presented a new pattern in asking for three out of twelve; the answers were not mutually exclusive; there was room for more difference of opinion in picking three out of twelve than in picking one out of four. The choices could as easily have been broken up into three groups of four choices each, all addressed to the same problem and introductory statement.

Another aid to clarity is to use negatives sparingly. Stating a question in the negative sometimes increases its inherent difficulty; more often it only makes it harder to understand, which is not the objective. The latter is practically always true of double negatives, which are avoided in good test practice.

For example, the true-false item, "The number of persons past sixty years of age is not decreasing in relation to the total popula-

tion," tests practically the same knowledge of fact but demands less ability to untangle words when it is rephrased to read, "The number of persons past sixty years of age is increasing in relation to the total population."

It is important also to use nouns instead of pronouns even if this involves seemingly unnecessary repetition.

In the following item the careless reader may interpret *he* to refer to *father* instead of to *child*.

When a dependent child is deprived of a father's support because of desertion, he should be placed in a foster home or institution.

Such an error may seem unlikely, but a study of wrong answers on questions of this type indicates that it is not unusual.

Each true-false item should ask for a decision in relation to only one idea. It is amazing to note how often two or more statements are made in a true-false item, sometimes of conflicting nature.

For example, the following item contains two definite ideas: "Our economic system is based on specialization and co-operation." The candidate may wish to respond affirmatively to the one idea and negatively to the other. Since the true-false question gives him no such opportunity, it is hardly reasonable to pose the question in double-headed form.

A short answer item is not clear if it gives insufficient information.

In the true-false item, "The President is the most influential man in the French government," the candidate is not told whether the reference is to the present president or to the office of president, and the answer may depend upon interpretation of this point.

Be Sure There Is a Correct Answer and Only One. Sometimes the really correct answer is not included among the alternatives in a multiple choice item.

The following item would seem to put the candidate in a quandary since he may feel that none of the choices given is *the* predominating factor:

CIVIL SERVICE IN PUBLIC WELFARE

In general, the predominating factor which brings persons to the point of seeking old-age assistance is:

- (a) poor health
- (b) the desire for a pension
- (c) the changes within our social and economic system
- (d) the failure of relatives to support.

The most obvious factor influencing people to seek old-age assistance would seem to be needy old age! As the statement is worded, this would seem to be the only possible correct answer although it is not included. One might hazard a guess that the second most important factor in leading people to ask for old-age assistance is the fact that government provides it.

Facts stated in a short answer item must be correct and explicit as to locality and time, since the candidate is given no opportunity to substantiate his choice.

A state examination for public welfare positions included the following true-false item: "The Probate Courts have jurisdiction over the estates of deceased persons." There is no probate court in the state concerned. The replies were not scored, in recognition of the justice of the criticism that the question should have included either *in this state* or *in most states*.

A short answer item relating to an area where theory and practice disagree should show the examiner's awareness of the conflict, and should indicate clearly from which point of view it is to be answered.

A recent examination for supervisor included the following item:

The objective of the medical social worker connected with a hospital or clinic is to:

- (a) help the physician in the clinic by securing social resources
- (b) help the patient and his family meet the problems created by the illness
- (c) determine the ability of the patient to pay for medical care
- (d) show the patient how to follow out the doctor's treatment plans.

The key answer was (b). The argument of those who checked (c) was that, while (b) should be the objective in theory, in many departments in the city concerned (c) actually *is* the objective. This may seem like "hair-splitting" to many, but the number of candidates checking (c) indicates that the question should have referred clearly to theory.

Either the key answer should hold true according to all authorities, places, and dates, or the question should be specific as to the point of reference.

The answer to the following true-false item would be "true" in some communities and at some times, and "false" under other circumstances.

A private family welfare agency is equipped to emphasize the treatment of personal inadequacies rather than to deal with situations where external factors have created the problem.¹

Test experts usually prefer to avoid use of such modifiers as *always*, *totally*, *entirely*, *never*, and to substitute for them words like *usually*, *generally*, *customarily*, *in the majority of cases*, *rarely*, or *seldom*, because there is always the danger that someone will rake up an exception to an absolute statement substantiated by some authority. It is considered sound to use an absolute modifier when the question is in a field of knowledge in which exact determination of facts is possible. In items relating to social work this would mean that use of absolute modifiers was rarely practical.

Avoid Inclusion of Items on Controversial Subjects. A further consideration is that short answer items should not be addressed to points about which there is a difference of opinion even when all the foregoing precautions on form have been borne in mind. This is a very real consideration in writing examinations for public welfare positions because judgments about desirable case-work methods and social attitudes are both open to difference of opinion.

¹ There are several things obviously wrong with the wording of this item from the point of view of clarity as well, but these difficulties are not germane to the point under discussion.

The correctness of a course of action in case-work situations depends on the effect of the fusion of many variables. Any judgment or decision so based is obviously somewhat subjective and open to challenge. To force the candidate to indicate that any one course of action is all right or all wrong without giving him opportunity to present supporting data and without evaluating his argument, may be dangerous except in dealing with very elementary material.

The question then arises as to how useful for testing case-work knowledge is that type of short answer item which poses a case summary and directs a multiple choice question to the problem which it illustrates. Posing a case situation in an essay item gives candidates a common groundwork of facts from which to start analysis and discussion—it sets only those limits to the candidate's response which are necessary for purposes of scoring. The case summary form in short answer items relating to case-work practice is a different matter. The candidate can do little analyzing and no discussing in a short answer response. The test expert can hardly cover all possible variations in one item summarizing a case situation. The better the case worker, the less willing he may be to make a categorical response to a specific case problem if he feels he is not given all the elements. Therefore, in testing case-work judgments or knowledge of case-work concepts by means of short answer items, it may be safer to address the question to a theory or principle rather than to a hypothetical case situation.¹

It is suggested that the following four true-false items test case-work knowledge as well as it would be tested by short answer items directed to a posed case situation on the same issue. Neither type of item can test more than the rudiments of case-work knowledge without danger of getting into controversial subjects.

1. Advice and promises should be given freely in a first interview in order to gain the client's confidence.
2. When an applicant must be refused, care should be taken to reject the application rather than the applicant.

¹ For modification of this point see pp. 358–359.

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3. The most highly trained case workers are more valuable in home visiting, therefore new workers may be best trained in intake departments.
4. In attempting to secure information a worker should use only direct questions.

Social workers realize that a case worker's attitude toward individuals and society often has more to do with his success than his knowledge or ability. Therefore they often try to test attitudes by means of short answer items which concern opinion about social or ethical concepts and dogmas. The difficulty is that the correctness of attitudes or social points of view is not a matter of fact but of opinion.

Recent short answer examinations are full of items like the following which is clearly stated, to be sure, and to which almost any candidate might be willing to record a categorical response, but on which people hold opposing convictions with equal fervor.

Place the appropriate capital letter before each statement:

A=absolutely right; B=probably right; C=absolutely wrong; D=probably wrong.

1. Any government has a reasonable excuse for denying the rights of citizenship to any religious group.
2. The size of the relief grant should depend on the individual's thriftiness.
3. There would be a material decrease in crime in the United States if punishment of criminals were more severe.

It seems obvious that this type of question should be avoided.

There is particular danger of getting into controversial subjects in testing for supervisory positions in public welfare. Again the question arises, For what qualities should a supervisor be tested beyond those for which one tests a case worker? Not primarily for knowledge of a new set of facts. The problem in the main is to test knowledge of supervisory skills—which, after all, are akin to case-work skills—judgment, and capacity to handle things “in the large.” Right and wrong answers, correct and incorrect meth-

ods in relation to all of these, are largely matters of opinion on human relationships and are therefore open to argument. The more responsible the position in the case-work hierarchy, the more controversial is the subject matter, and therefore the more limited the usefulness of the short answer item to test for total capacity.

Minimize the Chances of Guessing. There is always some element of guessing in answering short answer items. Suggested choices offer a royal opportunity to the candidate who does not know but is willing to take a chance. Some corrective to this misuse of the test process can be applied through scoring. It is better practice, however, to lessen opportunity for successful guessing when building the test than to correct for it afterward. Both temptation and opportunity to guess can be lessened somewhat by following a few elementary rules of arrangement and wording.

The position of the correct answer in multiple choice items should vary so that a lead to the correct answer cannot be found in arrangement.

The blank line or lines on which the candidate is to insert his response in recall or completion items should be of uniform length so that the length of the line does not suggest the proper phrase.

True-false problems may be framed to require a negative answer in some instances and a positive one in others.

In multiple choice problems, unless and until evidence indicates which is the more satisfactory, the introductory statement may sometimes be framed positively and sometimes negatively, as: "Of the following the least accurate (or 'the most accurate') statement is . . ."¹

In writing multiple choice items the fourth choice may occasionally read, "none of the above choices is correct." When using this device, care should be taken that in some items this is the correct, and in others the incorrect, response.

In constructing matching problems, avoid arrangements that give

¹ Neither of these last two suggestions means that negatives need necessarily be used in the statement of the question. See p. 346 for discussion of this point.

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away the answer. Don't have an equal number of items in each column. If the number is equal, the candidate who is sure of a few pairings can probably make a fair guess at the last two or three.

In the following matching items (numbered 289–296) the terms numbered 7 and 9 are extras:

Associate the proper term with the description:

Description	Term
() 289. Diseased condition of tissue or organ.	1. Psychopathic.
() 290. Committing a fault or misdemeanor.	2. Pathological.
() 291. Premature mental development.	3. Immature.
() 292. Mentally diseased.	4. Delinquent.
() 293. Malreasoning.	5. Illiterate.
() 294. Very low intelligence.	6. Irrational.
() 295. Not full-grown; undeveloped.	7. I. Q.
() 296. Unable to read or write.	8. Precocious.
	9. Moron.
	10. Mentally deficient.

Not only are 7 and 9 extras, but they are concepts which might easily be confused with 3, 5, and 10. This inclusion means that the candidate has to work harder than if they were omitted. Moreover, the fact that the subjects of all "descriptions" and all "terms" are closely allied reduces still further the chance of guessing.

In writing matching items where words or phrases are to be paired with synonyms or antonyms care should be taken that either like or unlike grammatical parts are paired according to a consistent pattern. In other words, nouns (or noun-equivalents) are paired with nouns throughout or they may be paired throughout with adjectives or adverbs. Such consistency is desirable in order to avoid confusing the candidate and thereby making the item primarily a test of mental agility.

Also, to reduce opportunity for making successful guesses, it is better to have all concepts in each of the two columns in the same part of speech. If most of the concepts in one column are adjectives

tives and only one or two are nouns, and if the association of parts of speech in pairs between columns is grammatically consistent, then the task of selecting the associated word for the nouns is easy. The previous example is not consistent in these respects.

Avoid suggesting the correct choice by the manner in which it is worded as compared with the incorrect choices.

In each of the following items the care with which the (c) choices are worded in comparison with the (a)'s, (b)'s, and (d)'s gives good ground to the uninformed to guess that (c) is the correct answer in each case.

1. It is most important for a client to know what relief eligibility is. . . . (a) so that he will be able to help others in need of relief; (b) because his family may be suffering; (c) so that he can immediately assume his share of responsibility by giving the necessary information and helping in the verification of it; (d) because the law requires it.

2. The modern practice in the child-caring field recognizes that boarding care of children is desirable. . . . (a) at all times; (b) under no circumstances; (c) provided there is adequate supervision of the boarding home; (d) in very few cases.

Avoid letting over-qualification of a statement suggest that the answer is probably "yes."

The following item suffers from this fault:

The President, under some circumstances, virtually has within his own hands the power to determine whether this country shall go to war.

When two short answer items refer to one subject, avoid giving away the answer to the first by the wording of the second.

In the following items the answer to No. 1 is contained in the statement of No. 2.

1. Children from well-to-do families seldom develop behavior problems which necessitate clinical treatment.

2. Since children who attend child guidance clinics may represent a cross-section of children of the entire population, a fee for consultation at such clinics should never be charged.

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Use of the article "a" before choices is often a basis for guessing the answer and should therefore be avoided. It suggests either that the correct answer does not begin with a vowel, or that the writer of the question is trying to trick the candidate.

In the following item, ending the statement with "a" suggests that answers (2) and (4) are incorrect:

A judicial writ, authorizing and directing an officer to make an arrest, is called a . . .

- (1) summons
- (2) order of arrest
- (3) warrant
- (4) eviction

In a multiple choice item, all choices should be at least plausible. If only two choices make sense the item becomes in effect a true-false problem and the candidate has thereby a 50 per cent chance of guessing correctly.

In the following item, only choices (a) and (b) seem likely to be chosen by the candidate who does not himself fall under (a)!

The pair of terms which most nearly have the same meaning is . . .
(a) feeble-minded and mentally deficient; (b) illiterate and unintelligent; (c) client and investigator; (d) rehabilitation and remuneration.

One, or preferably more than one, wrong answer should be either so plausible or so nearly correct that it serves as a "distracter" or "foil," thus preventing the contestant from guessing, and forcing him to use judgment. The problem is to make the "distracters" distract without getting into the realm of controversy.

A special angle to the problem of eliminating opportunity for guessing in social work examinations of the short answer type is worth consideration. Social work practice is largely based on a few general principles or tenets. These are not hard to learn, although they may be hard to comprehend and certainly are hard to follow in practice. They can be taught in a parrot-like way in "cram"

schools to persons who have not the slightest capacity for putting them into operation. Once a candidate has learned them by rote, he will be greatly helped in guessing which are the right answers in any short answer test unless it has been carefully constructed with this danger in mind. While it is not this author's purpose to render aid and comfort to cram schools by suggesting what they might do to help their students pass social work examinations, it is worth noting that any such school that was smart enough to place in students' hands a list of "aids to correct guesses" like the following would certainly increase their chance of scoring bull's-eyes unless the examiners had been still smarter, and had devised their questions to circumvent such a scheme:

- Choose the answer to questions about ways of handling people that suggests consideration of their own plans for themselves.
- Choose the answer that suggests putting responsibility for decision or action on the client in a case situation, or on staff in a supervisory situation.
- Choose the answer that suggests that action must be based on facts pertaining to each situation.
- Look favorably at the answer that suggests considering the point of view of community groups.
- Avoid the answer that suggests coercion or use of authority.
- Avoid the answer that suggests punitive treatment: calling the police, putting in prison, commitment to an institution where another choice is care at home or in any family setting.
- Avoid any answer that suggests restricting or discriminating against people because they are poor.
- Avoid an answer in relation to case-work jobs which suggests that mechanics, records, etc. are more important than behavior.
- Avoid any answer in relation to organization that suggests duplication of effort.

The danger that such short cuts will be tried is serious enough to make it advisable that those drafting test items for social work positions take particular care to word them in such a way that they cannot be solved by any such simple formula.

It might also be worth trying to write social work items for basic positions without using any of the terms recurrent in case-work literature. This would have the double advantage of giving an "even break" to the able non-social worker who is trainable, and of reducing opportunity for the "guesser" or the "crammer" to achieve a good score through familiarity with nothing but the accepted terminology.

Don't Try to Trick the Candidate. There is a difference between making it hard for the candidate to guess, and deliberately tricking him. There was a time when civil service examinations were full of "trick" questions. Test experts today try to eliminate all such, not only because of the criticism they arouse, but more especially because they defeat the purpose of examination which is to test knowledge and ability rather than superficial smartness. Sometimes items turn out to be "trick" questions even where this was not the intent.

The following true-false item was criticized on that point: "A mother of sixty years of age is entitled to assistance."

Candidates objected that, in order to trick the candidate, the item included too much or too little, depending on whether it was designed to test knowledge of old-age assistance provisions or mothers' pension regulations. If the former were the intent, the item should have referred to *a woman of sixty years of age, in need*; if the latter, then the woman's age should have been eliminated as having no bearing. In either case the phrase *in need* should have been included. The item was not scored.

Keep the Subject Matter Related to the Position. A general criticism often leveled at short answer examinations is that they are theoretical and not related to the position. Part of the basis for this criticism undoubtedly lies in the fact that short answer items in civil service examinations are often lifted bodily from tests in the fields of education or mental measurements. Abilities to be tested in civil service examinations may include the various components of intelligence. Test experts have assembled thousands of

test items which have been demonstrated to be useful in testing special abilities needed in many positions. Since these items have been tried out in a given form, and have proved their worth, it seems hazardous to change them. Therefore, they are often included "as is" with no explanation.

The person who takes a case-work examination may not see the reason for including such a question as the following:

Assuming that the first statement in each of the following pairs is true, mark the pairs:

- (a) if the second must be true
- (b) " " " cannot be true
- (c) " " " may or may not be true

1. All language consists of arbitrary symbols.
2. All arbitrary symbols which are in use are parts of a language.
1. Eskimos live in snow or ice houses called igloos.
2. Igloos are part of the material culture of the Eskimos.

These are, of course, tests designed primarily to measure reasoning ability, and as such might properly be used in a social work examination for which educational entrance requirements were low. One could hardly wonder, however, were the competitor to question the relevance of language symbols and Eskimo igloos to competency in public welfare. The same type of reasoning problems could have been posed equally well in questions whose content dealt with the subject matter of social work. Or the question as it was stated and others intended to test additional intellectual abilities could have been grouped under some such statement as the following: "The questions given below are not included to test your knowledge but your ability to read accurately, reason clearly, and follow instructions. These abilities are considered important in the position for which you are applying."

It has been suggested previously¹ that short answer items based upon case summaries are likely to be neither particularly useful nor

¹ See p. 350.

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reliable to test knowledge of case-work practice. Such case summaries could well be used, however, to test knowledge of exact facts about laws or regulations on eligibility for various forms of relief. Used for this purpose, the case summary item would be reliable, useful, and have the added advantage of giving a case-work flavor to the examination.

The following item is a straight test of knowledge of citizenship laws. The fact that it is in the form of a case situation gives it concreteness and bearing upon the relief worker's job. The item has the added advantage of containing "distracters" that distract.¹

A woman client, born in Russia, receiving home relief, tells you that her husband came to this country in 1888, was naturalized in New York County in 1898, and that she married him on September 30, 1930. Her husband is now deceased. There are two children, 4 and 2. She wants to know if she is a citizen. Your answer should be:

- (a) Yes, because she married a citizen.
- (b) Yes, because two of her children were born in this country.
- (c) No, because she married a naturalized citizen after September 22, 1922.
- (d) No, because she is not a native and did not gain citizenship by marrying a naturalized citizen after September 22, 1922.

Be Sure That Knowledge Tested Is a Representative Sample of Knowledge Needed. Tests for most public welfare positions must obviously cover not only knowledge in the field of public welfare itself—including special techniques and data on the relief situation and on community resources—but also knowledge of the larger field of social work, of human behavior and its motivation, of related fields such as those of public health and housing, of the federal and state relief situation and provisions, and of current social and economic situations and trends. This is a large area to cover even with an examination so ideally suited to comprehensive testing for factual knowledge as is the short answer examination. Pre-

¹ See pp. 143, 355.

sumably only three or four test items each can be devoted to some of these areas. Care must therefore be taken that each small group of items which is to sample knowledge of a general area represents, as fairly as may be, a cross-section of important knowledge pertaining to that area. To make economical use of the few items allotted to sampling knowledge in a collateral field, it would seem preferable to direct questions rather at understanding of concept or underlying principle than at factual detail.

To answer the following question on public health correctly, one would have to know elementary facts about the nature, incidence, and means of combating 10 different diseases, something about vital statistics, and about the function of a health department:

The surest test of whether the authorities of public health administration in New York City are doing effective work is seen in the:

- (a) decrease in death rates from yellow fever, smallpox, pneumonia, mumps
- (b) decrease in death rates from typhoid, diphtheria, tuberculosis
- (c) decrease in death rates from diabetes, heart disease, cancer
- (d) increase in the birth rate.

To answer correctly the following question from the same examination requires broad knowledge of modern theories of control of communicable diseases:

The best of the following methods of combating communicable diseases is:

- (a) fumigating homes in which cases of contagious disease have been living
- (b) inoculating against typhoid fever all persons known to have been in contact with a typhoid patient
- (c) imposing a quarantine period upon all incoming vessels
- (d) enforcing the law requiring reporting of communicable diseases.

The two questions together seem to sample rather adequately a candidate's knowledge of the public health field. The chief criti-

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cism to be made of the two items is that they are over-long and therefore tend to be reading tests as well as tests of knowledge.

There are additional reasons why directing short answer items at general theories or institutions may be better than directing them at specific and detailed items of fact. Familiarity with a thousand items of fact may not predict as good a case worker as does an understanding of a dozen theories and trends to which those facts are related.

Would not the administrator, for example, prefer to have on his staff the person who failed No. 1 of the following items, but answered No. 2 correctly?

1. A child born out of wedlock is described as _____.
2. It is not generally considered the best case-work practice to give relief to a mother if her child was born out of wedlock.

Both items are tests of knowledge relating to illegitimacy. The former involves no principle, the latter does. With a limited number of test items in any one examination and a large area to cover, the type of question posed in item No. 2 seems more economical. The question which tests familiarity with details of fact related to the public welfare position rather than familiarity with the social concept to which the fact relates favors incumbents as compared to outsiders. Unfortunately, it may also favor former incumbents who have been dismissed for poor record and who are trying to gain reinstatement. Having to re-employ previously dismissed staff because they passed an examination, may be a serious problem in jurisdictions where the ranking candidate must be appointed, and where previous experience is not qualitatively evaluated.

The two questions which follow illustrate how incumbents and outsiders may be favored or placed at a disadvantage by the type of question selected:

1. A dependent child may not be given assistance in [state] so long as there is a legally responsible relative living.

2. If it is possible to avoid it, an adopted child should never be informed that he is adopted.

The thoughtful outsider with a knowledge of principles underlying case work might "flunk" the first item for lack of legal information readily acquired by those on the job, and yet answer the second correctly; while a staff member who had no understanding of the principles behind case work but was letter perfect in the law might answer No. 1 correctly and fail No. 2.

Avoid Repeating Items from One Examination to Another. While knowledge necessary to good performance in a public welfare position covers a wide area, that which lies within the field of social work itself is somewhat circumscribed. This means that items on social work in short answer examinations may tend to become repetitious and questions may fall into groups which have stock answers. It also means that social workers who are asked to submit questions for public welfare examinations find it difficult to "dig up" new material and that they therefore may be tempted to borrow items from one examination to fill out another. A glance at a collection of public welfare examinations which have been given recently in various states shows a great deal of repetition of test material. One "test family" has traveled intact through the states from the Atlantic to the Pacific in the same distressing social and economic situation, bearing the same name, and posing the same problems to candidates for examination. Alert cram schools are quick to note such repetition and to coach accordingly.

ILLUSTRATIVE LIST OF ASSORTED SHORT ANSWER ITEMS

Many of the short answer items cited in previous pages were chosen to illustrate practice which should be avoided. In order not to lean toward the negative side, there is given here a list of items which seem less open to criticism on content and form. It includes tests of knowledge of principles underlying the administration of relief and of principles and facts in related fields.

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The items selected illustrate several short answer forms, and they include a range from questions that are quite easy to those that are relatively hard. The list is not intended to be typical of what might go into a short answer examination for any position; first, because it could not be made valid even as a sample portion of a test without a description of the position; and second, because questions on budgets, administrative devices, and laws must be omitted for reasons of space or lack of known locale. It is merely a collection of test items, which in the judgment of the author are relatively reliable, and which may be suggestive to the reader. Since they are included to illustrate several things they are not arranged in logical order. Some items are original, some culled verbatim, and some reworded. There has been no opportunity to check their reliability in practice. Each item is followed by comment on what it seems to test, because in writing short answer items for the purpose of testing for one set of factors it is often forgotten that they might test for others as well.

1. *The increasing mechanization of industry tends to make it harder for older than for younger workers to secure and hold jobs.*

This is a true-false item to which the correct response is "true." It would seem to test knowledge of current industrial conditions. The item may be open to criticism as combining two predicates, *secure* and *hold*. The two concepts are closely allied, however, and to omit either would seem to make the answer rather obvious.

2. *In social work practice it is considered wise to fix a standard of relief for employable people which allows no margin above the minimum subsistence level, since limiting relief to that level tends to encourage clients to look for jobs.*

This true-false item seems to test several things: knowledge of economic terminology, social work practice, and motivation of human behavior. The answer would be debatable if the qualifying phrase *in social work practice* were omitted. As it stands, there can be little argument that the correct response is "false."

3. *The single tax is a proposal sponsored by the Communist Party to accomplish the redistribution of wealth so that all would have an equal amount.*

This true-false item tests knowledge of theories of social and economic organization, or principles of the Communist Party, or of both. In other words, the correct answer of "false" can be arrived at from knowledge about the theory of the single tax; by knowing that the Communist Party does not sponsor the single tax theory; or by knowing that the platform of the Communist Party does not propose to redistribute wealth so that all would have an equal amount. It seems a fair question for a basic public welfare job, since it includes some common misconceptions about political theory.

4. *The Elizabethan Poor Law emphasized local responsibility and legal settlement.*

This true-false item tests knowledge of English history (in so far as it is necessary to identify "Elizabeth"), and of social work history. The correct answer of "true" could be arrived at by knowing something about English poor laws or by knowing that local responsibility and legal settlement are characteristic of American public relief, and that our system is in general based on the English. This item combines two ideas—*local responsibility* and *legal settlement*—in the predicate. However, as in No. 1 above, the items are so closely allied that this seems permissible.

5. *Successful treatment of dementia praecox has recently been reported in a number of cases by means of (1) malaria germs, (2) sulfanilamide, (3) saline solution, (4) insulin shock.*

This multiple choice question tests knowledge of important current medical information; knowledge of medical terms; and perhaps the habit of reading the newspapers. Note that the statement is not that *dementia praecox has been cured*, but that *successful treatment of dementia praecox* has been reported. The correct choice of (4) can be made either by knowing that insulin shock has been used to treat dementia praecox; or, through a process of elimination, by knowing that malaria germs have recently been used in the treatment of certain types of syphilis and that sulfanilamide is successfully used in treatment of certain diseases of the "'coccus" family, and by recognizing that choice (3) is not particularly plausible. The question is good in that at least

two of the treatments suggested in incorrect answers have been currently discussed in the newspapers in connection with other diseases, and are therefore good distracters, while the third incorrect choice is not completely implausible.

6. *Expediency rather than desirability has dictated policy in cases where states have delegated supervision of aid to dependent children to judicial rather than to administrative agencies.*

The answer to this true-false question is "true." The item tests knowledge of the traditional function of courts, of tenets in the field of child care, of the history of child welfare in general or in states where aid to dependent children has been a function of courts. *Desirability* and *expediency* are rather broad terms. It might be held that what is expedient is desirable. However, this line of argument verges on "hair-splitting."

7. *An organization of society in which the woman is the dominant factor in the social group is known as what kind of society? (Directions indicated that answer is to be in form of single adjective in the space provided.)*

This is a recall or completion item, and, like all of its kind, it tests memory. It also tests knowledge of concepts in the fields of sociology, anthropology, or ethnology.

8. *Retail prices tend to respond less quickly to changes in demand and supply than wholesale prices.*

The answer to this true-false item is "true." It seems to test knowledge of economic fact, or the ability to reason inductively. In other words, one may have learned that wholesale prices are very sensitive to demand and supply, or one may reason in terms of what effect a change in the wheat crop has on wheat prices in the grain market and on the price of a loaf of bread. The first reaction of several well-informed persons on whom this item was tried out was, "Of course, I wouldn't know the answer to that one." Eventually each arrived at the correct answer, which would seem to indicate that the item is difficult but fair.

9. *Supervision of investigators in a public welfare department should be confined to careful check on errors and omissions.*

The answer is, of course, "false." This is a rather obvious question that tests knowledge of the function of supervision, knowledge of the

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function of investigators, and perhaps willingness of the individual to learn.

10. *"Rexists," whose leader is Leon Degrelle, are (1) Belgian Fascists, (2) former members of the French Croix de Feu, (3) Spanish Monarchists fighting with the insurgents, (4) Austrian Nazis.*

The correct choice here is (1). The item certainly tests knowledge of current political developments. If one does not know the answer as fact he may be able to arrive at it by a complicated process of reasoning involving knowledge of derivation of words, familiarity with characteristics of proper names in France, Belgium, Spain, and Austria, knowledge that Belgium is the only one of the countries named which is now ruled by a king. It may be considered a difficult item and yet it may test only the kind of memory that is involved in recalling two words associated in a newspaper headline.

11. *The tendency to indulge in day dreaming is a characteristic of an introverted type of person.*

The answer is "true," and the item tests knowledge of terms used in mental hygiene or any related fields, and knowledge of human behavior.

12. *Life insurance policies are sometimes worth more than their face value.*

The correct answer is "true." This item probably tests either knowledge of terminology and fact in the insurance field, or capacity to reason inductively. One may either know that the answer is in the affirmative and that *face value* refers to the basic sum to be paid when the policy is payable; or one may guess the meaning of the term and reason from personal experience that double indemnity clauses certainly double the sum collectible; that mortuary dividends may increase the principal sum payable at death; or that uncollected dividends or interest increase the total value of a policy. This is another question, like item No. 8 above, to which the first reaction of generally well-informed people was, "I just don't know." Similarly, without prompting they eventually chose the correct answer after some thought.

13. *A child committed to the care of the state on the grounds of parental neglect should never be returned to his parents.*

This is a true-false item to which the answer is "false." It tests at least such attributes as knowledge of child welfare theory, knowledge

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of human behavior, knowledge of law, attitude toward rights of individuals.

14. *The height-weight-age ratio is not a reliable index of individual nutrition.*

The correct answer is "true." The item seems to test knowledge of nutrition, of statistical method and terminology, and of structure of the human body. In other words, one may make the correct choice by knowing the statement is true per se; by reasoning that an index based on averages from a large number of instances may not be a sound index in a particular case; or by knowing that variations in the structure of the body may influence weight, and yet have little to do with nutrition.

15. *The burden of scientific evidence leads to the conclusion that there is a criminal type which can be recognized by certain external characteristics.*

The correct answer of "false" may be arrived at by knowledge of psychology, anthropology, criminology, or other fields, or by knowing that phrenology and related theories have been demonstrated to be unscientific. This type of question seems often to be overemphasized in public welfare examinations. Some examinations studied contain 15 to 20 items, all testing knowledge of the same general theory.

16. *The chief factor in increasing the problem of old-age dependency in recent years has been the increasing average span of life.*

The correct answer is "false" since the increasing average span of life is less of a factor in increasing the problem of dependency than are industrial changes. The item tests knowledge of vital statistics, public health, industrial and economic conditions, capacity to reason, and familiarity with causes of old-age dependency.

17. *To further the development of a constructive child-training program it is generally considered that institutions which have a large number of dependent and neglected children of school age should maintain a school on the institution grounds.*

The correct answer is "false." The item tests at least knowledge of practice in child welfare, education, institutional management, or case work in general.

18. *The term "vital statistics" applies to such data as (1) costs of living indices, (2) number of persons applying for relief and per capita*

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costs of providing it, (3) records of births, marriages, and deaths, (4) stock market prices, car loadings, production rates in key industries, and similar important indices of business trends.

The correct choice is (3). Since some authorities include marriage and morbidity rates in vital statistics and some do not, it is important that the item be worded *such data as*. The item tests knowledge of statistical method and terminology.

19. *The problem presented to the relief administration by a client who refuses to work is most similar to the problem presented to (1) a child guidance clinic by a child who steals, (2) the Board of Health by a person with poliomyelitis, (3) the police by a person guilty of violation of speed laws, (4) immigration authorities by an illegal entry.*

Choice (1) is correct since refusal to work and stealing are considered symptomatic behavior and therefore present diagnostic and treatment problems to the organizations concerned. This item seems primarily to test knowledge of human behavior; also reasoning ability, knowledge of medical terminology, the nature of relief problems, the function of child guidance clinics, the function of police and immigration authorities. It is also in part a reading test. It is an item with which well-informed persons without knowledge of social work have difficulty and which social workers usually answer correctly.

20. *The most accurate of the following is (1) the federal government depends mostly on real estate taxes, and secondarily on income and inheritance taxes, (2) municipal governments depend mostly on real estate taxes, cannot collect customs taxes but sometimes have the right to impose a business operation tax, (3) in the order of amount of return the taxation revenue of municipal governments comes from the following: franchise, business license, real estate, income, (4) revenues from customs duties are reserved to state and federal governments.*

The correct choice is (2). This item seems to test knowledge of taxation, ability to read, ability to reason, knowledge of law, knowledge of federal, state, and municipal functions and relationships. It is a bit complicated, but has the advantage of testing knowledge of underlying principles rather than isolated items of fact.

21. *Associate the name of the author with the book which he or she has written or compiled by putting the number of the author's name in the space before the name of the book. Both lists are arranged alpha-*

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betically. There are more authors' names than books. Each author may have written more than one of the books in the list.

—— <i>A Changing Psychology in Social Case Work</i>	1. <i>Grace Abbott</i>
—— <i>A Mind That Found Itself</i>	2. <i>Clara Bassett</i>
—— <i>Coming of Age in Samoa</i>	3. <i>Clifford W. Beers</i>
—— <i>Growing Up</i>	4. <i>Joanna C. Colcord</i>
—— <i>How Foster Children Turn Out</i>	5. <i>Karl de Schweinitz</i>
—— <i>Mental Hygiene in the Community</i>	6. <i>Paul H. Douglas</i>
—— <i>Middletown in Transition</i>	7. <i>Abraham Epstein</i>
—— <i>Social Case Recording</i>	8. <i>Sigmund Freud</i>
—— <i>Social Diagnosis</i>	9. <i>Gordon Hamilton</i>
—— <i>Social Security in the United States</i>	10. <i>Jane M. Hoey</i>
—— <i>Some Aspects of Relief in Family Casework</i>	11. <i>Harry L. Hopkins</i>
—— <i>Spending to Save</i>	12. <i>Dorothy C. Kahn</i>
—— <i>The Art of Helping People Out of Trouble</i>	13. <i>Russell H. Kurtz</i>
—— <i>The Child and the State</i>	14. <i>Porter R. Lee</i>
—— <i>The Public Assistance Worker</i>	15. <i>Sinclair Lewis</i>
—— <i>The Short Contact in Social Case Work</i>	16. <i>R. S. and Mrs. H. (M.) Lynd</i>
—— <i>What Is Social Case Work?</i>	17. <i>Grace F. Marcus</i>
	18. <i>Margaret Mead</i>
	19. <i>Mary E. Richmond</i>
	20. <i>Virginia P. Robinson</i>
	21. <i>Eleanor Roosevelt</i>
	22. <i>Sophie van S. Thies</i>
	23. <i>Henry R. Thurston</i>
	24. <i>Robert S. Wilson</i>

In this item numbers 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 21, and 23 are "extras." They are all names of authors, however, and persons who might conceivably have written under some one of the titles listed in the book column. The list represents several fields. It also represents standard "works" and recent books.

CHAPTER XXII

SCORING WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS

ADVISING ON VALIDITY OF KEYS TO SHORT ANSWER ITEMS

SOCIAL workers are occasionally asked by examining agencies to advise on the validity of a key for scoring short answer items and are often asked to score essay problems. The subject expert's help is not needed in scoring short answer items after a valid key has been established because scoring consists only in tabulating correct and incorrect responses and computing scores therefrom according to mathematical formulae.

If a short answer item has been correctly framed, only one correct response is possible, with the occasional exception of recall or completion items where two words with nearly the same meaning may be used to fill a gap.

For example, either of the words *relapse* or *reactivation* might be considered a correct response to the following:

The term used to describe recurrence of a disease before complete recovery is _____.

Residents of Louisiana might be considered justified in inserting either *parish* or *county* in replying to the following:

The largest definitely outlined political subdivision of a state is called a _____.

Whenever many protests are received on a single item or a very high proportion of incorrect answers is recorded for an item, the test technician usually inquires into the nature of the item and probable causes of incorrect responses. The responses may simply indicate that the question was a difficult one and will serve its intended purpose of improving the scores of exceptionally well-informed candidates. Or evidence may point to the conclusion that

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the item was so vaguely worded that responses to it should not be scored at all. If, however, answers presumed to be incorrect follow a generally uniform pattern or patterns, the test expert considers the possibility that an alternative answer is admissible. When content rather than form creates the trouble, the opinion of the expert in the field concerned may be needed in order to determine whether more than one correct interpretation of the meaning of the item is possible, or whether there might properly be controversy over the correct response even though there is no question as to the purport of the item. If the difficulty is found to lie in instructions, form, or wording, decision whether to allow latitude in scoring will usually be made by the test technician alone.

In the following item choice (2) was originally designated as the key answer:

Outdoor relief commonly refers to the kind of relief given to support people (1) through soup kitchens or breadlines, (2) in their own or other family units, (3) in institutions, (4) in none of these.

The test expert who may know only that home relief is outdoor relief and institutional relief is indoor relief may regard (2) as the only correct answer. The social worker knows, however, that while the term *outdoor relief* is not commonly used in connection with soup kitchens and breadlines, these may, properly speaking, be defined as one form of outdoor relief and a very necessary form in certain emergent situations. He therefore recommends that, since the item was not properly worded, choice (1) be allowed as an alternate correct answer.

The following item illustrates a situation in which the *best definition*, according to practice in the agency for which the examination was given, differed from that in other public agencies in which candidates had had experience. The choice of correct answer therefore is open to argument.

The best definition of "a case," for a case count in a public relief agency, is (a) all applications received, (b) only those who receive re-

lief, (c) those receiving relief and service, (d) those accepted for investigation.

All four responses were rated as correct at the suggestion of social work advisers, which is equivalent to omitting to score the item.

The usual policy of giving the benefit of the doubt to the candidate in all such cases seems reasonable. The fact that in a short answer item he is given no chance to substantiate his choice puts great responsibility on those who frame questions and keys for scoring them. If they unwittingly put the candidate in a quandary, it is felt that he should not pay the price.

In validating keys for scoring short answer items the social worker's advice may also be needed for evaluating the standing of authorities quoted by candidates in an *ex post facto* argument about the justice of allowing an alternate response. When absolute modifiers such as *never* or *always* have been used, a candidate who can cite an exception or quote an authority contravening the key answer has a fairly clear case to support his contention that an alternate should be allowed. If the item called for a choice representing the *best*, or the *least desirable* practice, the situation may come to a battle of authorities cited against each other by the examining agency and the candidate. In such instance the social work adviser may be called upon to serve as umpire in passing on the "up-to-dateness," or the professional standing of respective authorities who have conflicting points of view.

In proffering advice on allowing alternate replies to short answer items, the social work adviser has to bear in mind that the test item to which the answer is immediately obvious is really no test. The inventor of short answer items tries to tread the narrow line between being sure, on the one hand, that there is only one completely correct answer and, on the other, taxing the candidate's reasoning power, memory, knowledge of theory and practice, and perhaps other factors. If the critic should recommend allowing alternate responses to all items that present a real problem of choice to the candidate, he would be throwing his influence toward

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making the test as a whole so easy that it would fail to differentiate between candidates having varying degrees of ability.

SCORING ESSAY ITEMS

Enough has been said previously about the element of subjectivity in free answer tests to indicate that the method of scoring them is all important.¹ A limited acquaintance with civil service procedure leads the writer to feel that while the technique of scoring essay items is fairly well developed in certain examining agencies, this technique is neglected in the practice of the majority of agencies using essay items. The purpose at this point is not to argue whether the essay form of test is or is not desirable, but rather to discuss ways by which scoring of essay items can be made more reliable if they are to be used.

The problem of devising a reliable key for scoring essay items leads back to the question, "What is the item to test?" There are those who say they use the essay item to test knowledge of subject matter, judgment, and skill in organizing and framing argument. Others intend essays to test only knowledge of subject matter. A third group believes that knowledge of subject matter alone can best be tested by short answer examinations, and adds one or two essay items to a short answer examination presumably to test the candidate's powers to see a problem in the large and to present a well-rounded response to it.

The apparent anomaly is that when essay items are scored according to a relatively objective plan the factors scored often bear little relation to the purpose for which essay items are held by their advocates to be suited. Only rarely, it would seem, is an attempt made to develop a sound and objective scoring plan by those who give credit for capacity to organize, differentiate, and substantiate in addition to credit for knowledge of subject matter. It is obvious that without such a plan rating is not only dangerous because

¹ See pp. 143-146, 167-169.

of the element of subjectivity, but also for the reason that the score may represent the rater's opinion of many hidden factors which are outside the test purpose of the item.

Those who use care in preparing keys for scoring essay items seem usually either to plan them so that they will score content alone or so that relatively little weight will be given in the score to other factors. For example, credit for sorting out major considerations from those less important is often given only by the device of weighting certain points in a possible response more heavily than others.

The comparatively small group who prefer to "play down" the importance of knowledge of subject matter in scoring essay items has apparently been somewhat overwhelmed by the difficulty of constructing a reliable key for rating objectively the complex elements that make up ability to see a problem as a whole and to present balanced and substantiated reasons for one's position. If such keys could be devised—and the effort appears worth making—it would seem that essay items, when these are used in combination with short answer items, might well be restricted to measuring those qualities which the short answer item cannot measure. When the essay question is used alone, the key for scoring it must of course give heavy weight to knowledge of subject matter.

What does a key to an essay problem look like? The writer's difficulty in finding one suggests that interested readers may have difficulty also. For this reason there is given here an essay item taken from an examination for interviewer given by the United States Employment Service, with a key outline of acceptable responses, a scale for credits awarded, and a sample candidate's response with the credits scored. The responses on which credit was given are italicized. (See page 377.)

The Item:

List the various methods of publicity open to a public employment service and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each method.

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Outline of Acceptable Responses (Key)

1. Press releases.

Advantages:

1. Reaches many.
2. Local and personal touch.
3. Can be used to present all types of information.

Disadvantages:

1. Difficulty of obtaining correct place in paper.
2. Danger of being uninterestingly worded.
3. May be too long and involved.
4. Timing may be poor.
5. Danger in lack of editing. Story may be changed improperly by editor of paper.

2. Paid advertising.

Advantages:

1. For recruitment for special positions.
2. Opportunities for reaching the public through publications serving as reference guides, such as the telephone directory and publications of the Chamber of Commerce.

Disadvantages:

1. Danger of attracting too many of poor type.
2. Danger of giving impression of commercialism.
3. Costly.

3. Circular letters.

Advantages:

1. When limited to particular industry, can be geared to interests of industry.
2. Reaches many employers.

Disadvantages:

1. Danger of being overlooked—particularly affected by community attitude to such.
2. Danger in being sent too frequently.
3. Danger in lack of appeal by virtue of set-up and arrangement.
4. Costly.

4. Posters.

Advantages:

1. Attract attention.
2. Reach large number of persons, depending upon location.

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Disadvantages:

1. Ineffectively planned.
2. Costly.
3. Sometimes costly in proportion to usefulness.

5. Exhibits.

Advantages:

1. Appeal to certain types.
2. Reach many.
3. Attract attention.

Disadvantages:

1. Costly.
2. Takes time to prepare.

6. Radio.

Advantages:

1. Reaches many.
2. Type of material presented:
Might be worked out with Chamber of Commerce or other community group.
3. Dramatic and personalized appeal.

Disadvantages:

1. Expensive unless time donated by station.
2. Competition with programs for amusement.
3. Danger in over-advertising.
4. Difficulty in obtaining effective participants.

7. Speeches at luncheons, clubs and meetings.

Advantages:

1. Reach interested group.
2. Inexpensive.
3. Human touch.
4. Informal.
5. Provide opportunity for question and discussion.

Disadvantages:

1. Calls for special ability and training to be really effective.
2. Danger of giving out erroneous information or information not checked for release.

8. Field visits.

Advantages:

1. Personal; allows give and take in discussion.
2. Pertinent; provides relating of service to needs of employer.

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3. Allows representative to see employer's plant and familiarize himself with occupations.

Disadvantages:

1. Poor contact is worse than none.
2. Possibility of overselling service.
3. If small staff, personnel might be unable to devote time to placement function.

9. Staff participation in community affairs.

Advantages:

1. Identify office in minds of many people.

Disadvantages:

1. None, unless:
 - a. Danger of spreading confidential information about applicants.
 - b. Feeling of prejudice in community if staff participates more in one organization than in another.

10. Advisory councils.

Advantages:

1. Provides office with interested outsiders to interpret office to public.
2. Allows the office to learn the public attitude.

Disadvantages:

1. None, unless fails to function.

11. Good operations.

Advantages:

1. Good service is the best advertising any office can have.

Disadvantages:

1. None.

Scale for Score Credits Assigned for Acceptable Answers:

Give 1.5 for each *method* cited that is included in outline.

Give .5 additional for *development* of each method cited.

Give .5 for each *advantage* cited (mark these .5a).

Give .5 for each *disadvantage* cited (mark these .5d).

Candidate's Response with Credited Points Italicized and Credits Indicated:

"Various methods of publicity are available to Public Employment services and should be used as much as possible.

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"Radio addresses by the Director, Assistant Director, Supervisor and Managers are <i>one of the best means of reaching the public and should be used whenever time on the stations may be available.</i> As a general rule, most stations are <i>locally owned and are interested</i> in community problems, and for that reason will generally <i>grant the service 15 minute programs several times each month</i> , to acquaint the public with the work being done by the Public Employment office.	1.5	
	.5a	
	.5	
	.5	
	.5	
"Newspaper releases several times each month should be prepared, and if confined to <i>news of local interest</i> regarding the service are readily accepted and published by the paper. Newspapers however do not care for <i>general statistics and dull reading matter.</i> But anything of a local nature relative to <i>local employment possibilities and needs will be gladly received.</i>	1.5	
	.5	
	.5d	
	.5a	
"The Administrative heads of the Employment Service should <i>belong to as many organizations</i> as possible thereby creating <i>friendly contacts</i> , and should <i>address</i> these meetings whenever invited to do so. They should also maintain close contacts with <i>various city, county and State Boards</i> advising them of the progress of the service.	1.5	
	.5a	1.5
	.5	
"Advisory Counsels should be formed in every city and <i>respected, successful citizens</i> appointed. <i>For they make good salesmen</i> for the service, once their confidence and support is gained.	1.5	
	.5	
	.5a	
"The Field Supervisor should also <i>visit</i> as many Industrial plants, <i>business houses</i> , etc. as possible in the interest of the service."	1.5	
	.5	

[Total score for this item=15]

Several things are noteworthy in the key for scoring this essay item. First, it attempts to score nothing but knowledge of subject matter. Perhaps this is as well, since the key is itself not blameless in matters of English usage. Second, it does not attempt to differentiate between the respective values of various acceptable responses but gives equal weight to all methods, substantiating arguments, advantages, and disadvantages. Third, it may give the

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optimist who sees nothing but advantages, or the pessimist who sees nothing but disadvantages, a score equal to that of the more discriminating candidate who sees both assets and liabilities of each method cited, although he may not have covered as thoroughly the advantages or the disadvantages of each. Fourth, although the key does not indicate this, the maximum score for this item, when the figures are translated to a scale of 100, is 60.¹ In other words, the examiner assumes that no candidate working under the pressure of an examination can produce as complete a response as can a group of raters whose situation is not complicated by pressure of time and threat to the security of their jobs. The candidate who makes a response which is 60 per cent as good as the examiner's key answer is considered therefore as having done a practically perfect job.

The key is an excellent example of the scoring plan which stresses objectivity at the expense of not attempting to measure any elements of judgment, balance, or organization of material. Perhaps no other kind of key is reliable for scoring essay items. If this be true, one wonders, why use essay items at all except for considerations of time and expense when only a small group is to be examined. A member of the technical examining staff of the United States Employment Service replies to this point: "Although it is true that to rate almost entirely on the factual information presented is to rate on information that might be tested by short answer methods, nevertheless, we are asking the candidates to recall rather than to recognize information and that, in itself, seems to be of discriminative value."² If this be the sole reason for using essay tests, and the only way in which they may be safely used, then the game seems to the writer hardly worth the candle, particularly since certain forms of short answer tests also test recall.

Another type of key for scoring essay items, also worked out

¹ This fact ascertained in a conference with a staff member of the United States Employment Service.

² From correspondence with staff of United States Employment Service, Washington, D. C., January 5, 1939.

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with great care, is that used by the Department of Social Security of the State of Washington. The following scoring key was used for an essay item in an examination for Informational Representative:

The Problem:

Write a 2,000 word essay on Problems and Methods of Interpreting to the Public Employes and Employers the Program of Unemployment Compensation and Employment Service.

The Scoring Plan:

NAME _____

1. With 15 as the best score and 0 as the poorest give this essay a grade on organization _____
2. With 8 as the best score and 0 as the poorest give this essay a grade on grammar and general sentence construction _____
3. With 8 as the best score and 0 as the poorest give this essay a grade on the convincingness of the presentation _____
4. With 8 as the best score and 0 as the poorest give this essay a grade on clarity and straightforwardness _____
5. With 15 as the best score and 0 as the poorest give this essay a score on the way in which the philosophy of Unemployment Compensation and Employment Service and problems arising from such a philosophy are handled _____
6. With 15 as the best score and 0 as the poorest give this essay a score on the way in which the problems confronting the U. C. and E. S. are handled _____
7. With 15 as the best score and 0 as the poorest give this essay a score on the ideas for gaining publicity presented _____
8. With 15 as the best score and 0 as the poorest give this essay a score on the methods suggested for carrying out these publicity ideas _____

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9. With 25 as the best score and 0 as the poorest give this paper a score on the "paper as a whole" _____
10. Give any extra points you think this paper deserves for outstanding characteristics. List the reasons these points were given _____
- Total _____

Date _____

(READER)

This scoring sheet shows a deliberate effort to score some of the more intangible factors omitted in the key from the United States Employment Service previously quoted. It admittedly attempts to score on the basis of subjective judgment. Those who planned it tried to reduce subjectivity by isolating the factors on which the score is based. In point No. 9, however, they revert to an "overall" judgment, just as raters often do in scoring oral examinations. Which of the two scoring plans produces the better results, when both reliability and the relativity of the criteria to skills needed in the position are considered, is an open question.

Each of the agencies quoted exercises great care in drawing up an outline of points acceptable for credit in an essay item. Each lays stress on the need for educating the persons who are to rate essay items, provides the raters with detailed written instructions, and brings them together for frequent conference.

The special procedure used by the Department of Social Security of the State of Washington for establishing content of keys for scoring essay items in social work examinations indicates that agency's concern with achieving relative reliability in rating.

In scoring essay items in this agency in the 1938 examinations, professionally qualified readers were divided into teams of two each. Each team scored only one question of any test. To obtain a key for scoring, each member of a team read the same fifty papers, listing independently all points discussed. The resulting lists of topics were then discussed by the team with respect to the relative merit of individual points as answers. The key was revised and weights assigned. The readers then

read fifty more papers independently and a correlation of the grades given by the two readers was taken. If the correlation fell below $+.75$ the team was asked to discuss again the papers they had read. This process was continued until the correlation of reader scores on a group of fifty papers was $+.8$. Not until this degree of agreement had been attained were any final scores recorded. The report on this part of the examinations concluded with the statement, "It is felt that in general the reader reliability on the test is probably rather high."¹

When, in an examination given to a large number of candidates, a key for scoring essay items is to be checked against sample responses of candidates in order to ensure that the key is comprehensive and accurate, care should be taken that the sample selected represents a cross-section of the group as a whole. Range of scores, geographical distribution of candidates, and distribution according to background are some of the factors to remember in selecting the sample.

Some examining agencies develop no key for scoring essay questions and simply ask individual qualified and trusted social workers to read and assign score values to groups of papers according to a prescribed numerical scale. Sometimes the request is accompanied by a few simple suggestions such as the advisability of considering all answers to one item together instead of grading each paper as a whole. The same papers may or may not be graded by a member of the staff of the civil service agency. The final score awarded may be that fixed by the social work adviser or by the examiner, or an average of the two may be taken. If the divergence is great, a third person may be brought in as arbiter.

When subject experts are given neither a key nor an outline of suggested method, they will have to make their own rules for scoring. The following are some considerations to bear in mind:

1. Find out whether you are supposed to be scoring essay items on both content and form. Don't depend for this information on the in-

¹ From Report on Merit System Examination Procedure, State of Washington, Department of Social Security, Personnel Office, August 28, 1937, p. 6. Launor F. Carter, test technician.

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structions to candidates which precede the essay items on the printed examination. Apparently many examining agencies which score essay items only on content include in their instructions to candidates such a statement as this, "Neatness, spelling, and grammar will be considered in scoring your response." This would seem to be questionable practice, but it certainly prevails.

2. If you are to score on both content and form, keep the two separate in your consideration; decide what weight you wish to give to each, and prepare a scoring schedule that will give separate credit to each.

3. In making your schedule or key for scoring content of responses, list all acceptable points which might be made in a response to the item. Amplify the list by a preliminary reading of the papers, assign weight to the points in accordance with their relative importance, and score each response according to the scale you have built. (The same kind of key may be attempted for scoring method or form, but it will prove harder to make it objective.)

4. If you are scoring on form alone, decide what elements in form you should consider. Are you to restrict yourself to consideration of only such factors as logic, clarity of thought, skill in analysis of the problem, organization of material developed in argument; or should attention also be given to spelling, grammar, legibility, neatness, and similar matters? If these are to be included, how much weight should they be given? Conclusions on these points must be reached before you can proceed.

5. Score all the responses to one question in their order rather than score the entire paper for each candidate at a time. This is a simple device for avoiding "halo."

6. If someone else is scoring the same papers, try at least to check your own key against that of the other rater for comprehensiveness and emphasis.

For a social worker to score essay questions without using a method and key prepared under the supervision of test experts is certainly questionable practice. To refuse to score them without such expert assistance may be equally questionable under certain circumstances. The social worker who has been asked to grade examinations and is given no expert help is therefore placed in a dif-

ficult situation. He can at least submit to the examining agency his own tentative key and outline of method of scoring and ask for criticism from its technicians, if any, or for permission to secure such criticism from another competent source if the examining agency has no technical staff. Such a request might either secure for him the needed advice, or impress upon the examining agency the need for developing standardized methods.

CHAPTER XXIII

SERVING ON ORAL BOARDS

SOCIAL workers are often asked by examining agencies to serve as members of oral boards for public welfare examinations. This duty calls for the skill and cumulative experience of persons in positions of leadership whose time is precious and already subject to heavy demands. Such service is often unpaid, or insufficiently compensated. Nevertheless, social workers and the boards of their agencies quite generally have appreciated the obligation to comply with such requests. Fortunately, the gain is not all on one side. Certain benefits accrue to the social workers in the way of valuable experience in a new technique of interviewing. Those whose association has been with private agencies have been given illuminating insight into the problems of public welfare and its personnel. When social workers have served on oral boards which included representatives of other professions or of the business world, they have had experience in interpreting their own professional objectives and techniques to members of other community groups and in turn have had opportunity to learn from such groups. Those who are skeptical about the wisdom of selecting personnel through examinations have been able as participants to gain a more appreciative view of the methods, difficulties, and accomplishments of examining agencies.

INTERVIEWING

In discussing service as an oral board member, little can be said that will have general application; a great deal can be said about the problem of serving on a particular oral board. In other words, objectives, problems, and techniques of oral examining vary with the purpose of the examination, the subject matter of interviews,

the limits set by time allowed, the composition of boards, the nature of scoring schedules, and many other factors. Most social workers who serve on oral boards, skilled interviewers though they may be, find that they have to adapt their techniques in varying ways. Test interviewing demands, in part, other skills than are called for in worker-client or supervisor-worker relationships. Social workers, and perhaps particularly case workers, tend to see and to treat the individual as a whole in relation to his background of family relationships, cultural heritage, intellectual capacities, ambitions, vocational aptitudes, and emotional patterns. Service as an examiner frequently requires the social worker to execute an "about-face" from this approach and to consider personality as apart from background; knowledge as divorced from personality; appearance aside from physical fitness. The social work examiner may have to score *judgment* without being allowed to discuss with the candidate the position for which he is applying and for which an estimate of his judgment is necessary. A score on *freedom from prejudice* may be required without discussion of race, religion, or politics. The civil service agency may ask the examiner to decide upon a candidate's fitness for a type of position, rather than for a specific position in which all the elements of human relationships are important. To divorce oneself from a well-established habit of seeing around, above, and below an individual and upon request to view him instead in segments or layers is difficult for any social worker and well-nigh impossible for some.

Moreover, most social workers are accustomed to interviewing without arbitrary restrictions of time and with no restrictions on method except those dictated by their own judgment and experience. Outstanding skill has certainly been demonstrated by many social workers in certain parts of the process of oral examining. Their ability to overcome the candidate's resistance and to establish rapport with him in oral tests is remarkable—even as it comes out in the verbatim typewritten record of such interviews. Nevertheless, social workers sometimes experience difficulty in adjusting

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themselves to an interview of five or ten minutes in length; to prescribed limitations of subject matter; to compulsory use of set questions and follow-up; to impersonal relations with anonymous candidates; and sometimes to the methods and attitudes of their non-professional fellow board members.

There are other contrasts between the interview as a tool in social work and in examining. The case-work interview is often held primarily for purposes of treatment; the examining interview is purely diagnostic. The personnel interview in social work is for the definitive purpose of choosing applicants for specific positions; the personnel interview in civil service examinations is usually for the purpose of rounding out other selective procedures by attention to one limited set of factors only. That "intuitive sense" about personnel which some social workers say they acquire after years of interviewing may be valuable to them as employers; it may be a handicap to them as oral examiners.

In other words, successful interviewing in oral examinations is a technique of itself, and it may differ from one oral examination to another. The social worker who can select what is usable from his interviewing technique as a case worker or as an employer and adapt it to the arbitrary requirements of oral examining is likely to be highly acceptable both to candidates and to the examining agency.

To revert for a moment to that "sixth sense" on which many persons rely in selecting personnel by interview—how much of it depends unconsciously on certain characteristics of appearance, personality, or habit to which the interviewer reacts? All social workers know that phrenology and allied theories have long been discredited; that individuals with good judgment and the capacity to establish good individual and community contacts may have queer habits of dress or marked personal idiosyncrasies; that there is no scientific evidence to prove the existence of racial superiorities; that capacity to articulate well and to be apparently at ease in a difficult situation are neither prime requisites in every position nor

reliable indices by themselves of capacity to fulfil the total requirements of any position. Yet what employers who rely on an intuitive sense in selecting personnel are not sometimes strongly influenced for better or for worse, by "firm" or "weak" chins, extremes of size, a direct or a shifting gaze; marked severity or decorativeness in dress; long and scarlet fingernails or an extreme hat; a foreign name, accent or appearance; baffling reserve or over-assurance in manner? Some of these things may be important either for the effect that they have or for what they indicate. The danger is that they may have a "halo" effect beyond their real significance, or that unjustified deductions be made from them. It is particularly important in a brief oral examination that the social worker hold consideration of such externals either to the effect which they may have on others, or to their alterability, and that he control the temptation to prophesy what they may indicate in the way of deep-seated traits of personality.

The element of time limitation on oral examinations raises other questions. Social workers tend to favor including interviews in examinations for public welfare positions; but if time, money, and numbers dictate that five-minute interviews are all that can be allowed for case-work positions, are such interviews worth having? And are they worth the sacrifice of time involved from the point of view of the social worker who is asked to act as examiner?

The answer may depend on the nature of the rest of the examination and on the weight given to "orals." A possible modification is to give all candidates a five-minute interview in which personality is the chief consideration and which is qualifying for all those about whom no question is raised. Those whose performance in the interview occasions doubt are held for examination by a second board, which is allowed more leeway both as to time and content of the interview. This system meets the difficulties of volume and expense, and provides for fuller consideration for borderline or dubious cases, but it may lay the examining agency open to criticism. "They passed John Doe in five minutes without find-

ing out a thing about him, and then turned me down after grilling me for half an hour!"

The problem of the very short interview is likely to arise only in connection with rank-and-file jobs for which large numbers seek to qualify. Whether or not such interviews are useful then becomes a question of what qualifications or traits one seeks in a beginning worker in a public welfare department. Training and experience, intelligence, knowledge of fact, physical condition, and age can all be determined or tested elsewhere. Attitudes, ways of dealing with people, and judgment are not necessarily fixed attributes in the young beginning worker but are susceptible to change under supervision. Assuming that entrance requirements and written examinations for basic positions are planned to give advantage to the comparatively young, intelligent, and therefore trainable worker, it would seem that the oral test under such circumstances has only the limited but important function of sorting out those obviously unfitted by personality. Even for this limited reason, it may be worth while to preserve the very constricted oral test. Since it often takes better judgment and skill to make reliable "snap" decisions than long-considered ones, it may be worth the time of the busy social worker to participate even in the very brief oral test.

Twenty minutes to half an hour or more is usually allowed for oral examinations for supervisors, consultants, and administrators. Little defense can be advanced for interviews for such positions on a ten- or fifteen-minute schedule. The dignity, importance, and complexity of the position, and the fact that the candidates are not young people in training but persons of maturity who may be presumed to have already developed attitudes and convictions on social questions which it is important to ascertain, all seem to call for opportunity for more than snap judgment. Most examining agencies recognize this and plan accordingly. Where they fail to do so, some obligation for making known their own divergent point of view rests upon those who are asked to participate in oral

examinations. In some instances their responsibility may reach beyond mere statement of opinion.

As in any process in which subjective judgment is involved, success in oral examining lies in educating those who are to participate. This is accomplished through group conference of examiners preceding the interviews and by giving them prepared manuals or instructions outlining the purpose, scope, method, and limitations of the particular oral examination.

Manuals for oral examiners usually include detailed suggestions on interviewing technique with which every social worker is familiar—suggestions, for example, on methods of establishing rapport with the candidate, relieving his tension, and helping him to present himself in the most favorable light. Others relate to precautions about scoring only those factors on which evidence can be secured in the interview, or to the necessity for keeping out of areas of discussion where it is suspected that elements of prejudice may color judgments.

SCORING

Skill in interviewing is only part of the technique required of an oral board member. The situation calls also for skill in group discussion and in scoring.

The oral board member who cannot interpret what he sees in a candidate to other members of the board after the candidate has withdrawn, or who cannot translate his opinions into scores which fairly represent them, whatever the particular scoring system used, is no great help in the process of effective selection. His sole contribution is to help give the candidate a feeling that he has had a fair interview. This is an important contribution but not an adequate one.

If the board is entirely composed of social workers, conference about a candidate comes down to comparing notes and judgments, and perhaps guarding lest a small group of professionally trained people should set too high a standard in terms of job needs and the

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board's function. If, however, lay representatives or members from other professions are included, a social work member may have some responsibility for interpreting to them the candidate's professional experience and the demands of the position as well as for making understandable to others the evidence which he, as a skilled interviewer, has caught during the interview. Before recording his own score, he will wish to give full consideration in turn to the layman's reaction toward the candidate, for this often foreshadows community reaction. If the social worker happens to be the only skilled interviewer on the board, he may also have a function in demonstrating interviewing methods, or in explaining the nature and uses of a scoring plan.

To take this kind of responsibility without dominating the board, or making his leadership apparent is a task that taxes the social worker's skill. It is made more difficult by the fact that candidates with social work experience often quickly identify the one social worker on an oral board, whether by appearance, or a sense of some common bond between them, and address their remarks solely to him. Rotating the chairmanship of a board from one interview to another, or dividing subject matter and time somewhat arbitrarily among the several members of a board are devices used to secure some evenness of participation.

A problem which may face any oral board member, professional or lay, is whether or not to compensate in his own scoring for what he considers biased or unsound scoring on the part of another member. It is obvious that a sounder procedure in such a situation is to talk over the differing standards and try to arrive at a common basis.

One skilled social work examiner tells of an experience on an oral board of three in which one member consistently marked candidates far below the other two. For two days the social worker consistently over-rated all candidates by way of compensation. Finally, becoming worried about the soundness of his procedure, and also about how peculiar the total range of scores would look when plotted on a curve, he de-

cided that the time for action had come. He turned to the presumably overcritical member and said, "I have come to the conclusion that you and I have not been honest for two days, either with each other or with the candidates. I have seen your reaction to these people and feel that the scores you are recording do not represent your feeling. Because of this, the scores that I am recording do not fairly represent my feeling. Can't we get together on this in fairness to the candidates and in fairness to our own standing as examiners?" The other member admitted that he represented a group that was suspicious of the whole examining procedure and that he had been instructed to "rate down" a large share of candidates. By the time the question was raised, he had been so impressed with the fairness of the whole proceeding that he was quite ready to take responsibility for ignoring his instructions. Scoring proceeded on a normal basis from that point on.

The technique of scoring involves making judgments and translating them into numerical or other measurements. The precept has been often laid down that oral board members must free themselves from all prejudice. In this connection it must be recalled that prejudices may be professional as well as social, economic, religious, or political. The social work board member whose opinions about a candidate's personality are conditioned by his estimate of the training program in a particular training school, field of social work, or agency, or of the kind of experience that is gained by working under a particular executive or supervisor, is recording prejudiced judgments as surely as is the lay board member who does not like radicals or people with a foreign accent. It is not always possible to do away with personal prejudices. It is possible to keep them from affecting a score. Candidates are quick to sense when prejudice is entering in to their detriment, and when there is merely an honestly recognized difference of opinion between them and the board.

The writer had occasion recently to talk to a candidate emerging from an oral examining room. In response to the question, "How did you get on with your board?" he replied after some hesitation, "Well, that board has prejudices but I think on the whole they can handle them!"

When a persistent and wide variation occurs among scores recorded by the several members of a board, there may be various causes, such as misunderstanding about how the scoring sheet is to be used; definite prejudicial opinions on the part of one or more members; ingrained optimism or pessimism about personnel on the part of one member; or the intrusion of some special interest which is being served. When the influence of any of these factors is suspected, it would seem preferable in many cases to bring inconsistencies in scoring to the attention of those in charge of the examinations rather than to try to correct them internally. One of the chief causes of divergence in scoring oral examinations is that board members may not clearly comprehend the intended implication of the term "average." They may differ as to whether the "average" candidate—or the candidate who, they feel, is acceptable but not striking—is "average" in terms of the kind of individual they would consider acceptable in the position; in terms of the quality of the competing group; or in terms of the "average" run of ability in the general population. Someone—and that obviously the test supervisor—has to define the criterion to be used.

What are the characteristics of good scoring? Test technicians say that novices at interviewing and scoring tend to bunch candidates near the center of the scale; they see too many as average and too few as superior or inferior. Examiners believe that the total scores of any single examiner should show a rather wide range, from poor to excellent, with no marked bunching of scores at any one point and with a median score that is not far from the median for the total group of examiners. In order to determine what kind of scores their oral board members are assigning, test technicians often record all the scores assigned by each oral board member on a scale of 100 and translate these into a statistical curve which should presumably approximate the familiar "bell shape." On their part, oral board members may wish to keep records of scores assigned by them in order to determine for themselves what kind of scoring pattern they are following.

The scoring pattern will, of course, be greatly upset if those in charge of oral examinations do not route candidates to the board in mixed order. It is a mistake to present candidates for interview by oral boards in the order of the rank which they secured in earlier parts of the examination. If those appearing first are the better candidates, oral board members begin to fear that they are "passing" too large a proportion and tend to "rate down," only to find out later that the level of ability is getting increasingly lower. When the order of presentation is reversed, the board worries because it is passing no one, becomes less severe in scoring, and discovers later that the really superior candidates are among the last to be interviewed. By the time these discoveries are made it is usually too late to correct the situation. All of this merely points to the fact that it is at least well to know before beginning a series of interviews whether the candidates are scheduled in any particular order, and if so what has been the basis of arranging the schedule.

Scoring scales for oral examinations vary from a simple list of four or five factors in relation to each of which candidates are to be given a numerical score, up to elaborately worked-out scales in which opinions are recorded by means of curves or points on a line. Sometimes weights which are to be assigned to each factor are indicated; sometimes this information is withheld from the board. It is more important that the scale be understood and used with consistency than that it follow any set pattern. Consistent and discriminating scoring even on a poor or inadequate scale will still result in fairly reliable differentiation of the better from the poorer candidates.

The major problems, then, for the social worker in oral examining are to adapt interviewing skills to a new set of requirements; to take whatever leadership is necessary on a board without dominating it or making this leadership apparent; to divorce himself from prejudices, general and professional; and to score with discrimination and consistency.

CHAPTER XXIV

SUMMARY

THE important tasks on the social work horizon of today, so far as public welfare is concerned, are to understand the nature of personnel needs in public welfare, to work out standards of training and selection that will facilitate the employment of personnel qualified to meet those needs, and to help civil service agencies translate those standards into criteria of measurement. Public welfare administration is part of the total government program of public service. If social work is to make a contribution toward improving the practice of personnel administration in public welfare, it must ally itself, both in spirit and in action, with the large body of citizens who are interested in improving the quality of the total public service, and must understand what methods are most effectively used toward this end.

Progressive public officials and students of government agree that despite its obvious shortcomings, an honest, liberal, and constructive civil service system is the best medium we have for improving the quality of public service. It is unfortunately true that not all civil service systems are honest, liberal, and constructive. Moreover, it is possible to find flaws in the several steps of the examination and selection procedures of any merit system; many such flaws have been indicated in the course of this discussion. It must not be forgotten, however, that dependence is seldom placed upon a single step in the civil service procedure. The various forms of testing processes which have been reviewed in these pages are all interrelated and interdependent, so that, taken as a whole, a series of checks and balances has been evolved which presents a formidable front against the accidental or purposeful intrusion of unscientific or unfair practices. Moreover, studies are constantly being made by civil service authorities further to

safeguard and improve procedures. Those public officials and students of government who are in agreement upon the value of the merit system—and they are overwhelmingly in the majority—feel that to achieve maximum effectiveness the following goals must be set for federal, state, and local governments:

1. Enactment of sound civil service legislation, and extension of civil service coverage to all government positions—at least in administrative units—in which emphasis is on carrying out policies rather than determining them.
2. Protection of civil service legislation and administration against encroachments which hamper the effective operation of a merit plan.
3. Attainment of civil service administration that will promote sound and progressive public policy in each field of government service and ensure the highest level of performance in each position.

Sound civil service legislation clearly specifies application of the merit principle, and protects this not only through negative controls but also by providing for competent direction, and for financing which is adequate to permit the retention both of skilled technicians and of specialists in the various fields served.

To secure protection of the merit principle in civil service administration requires continuing interpretation of civil service aims and procedures to legislatures, courts, the general public, and to candidates; it requires awareness of the motives and procedures of groups that press, whether justifiably or not, for special privilege; it demands, as well, skill and courage in dealing with such groups; it implies securing intelligent support from the courts.

Administering civil service systems in a way that will promote sound and progressive public policy involves drafting comprehensive rules and regulations covering such matters as recruiting, methods of selection, appointments, waivers, appeals, leaves of all kinds, promotions, probationary periods, ratings, dismissals, demotions, salary schedules, and rules for reclassification.

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It implies also selecting for the civil service agency a staff equipped to install and carry out the civil service program in accordance with progressive technical practice. The full program of a civil service agency may include surveying the organization to be served; installing, or bringing up to date, a classification system; recommending personnel reorganization when necessary; establishing a liberal, flexible, and extensive recruiting and examining procedure to ensure technical and professional competence among civil service appointees; promoting a system of personnel management after selection that will offer career opportunity in government service to qualified persons; and conducting a research program on the efficiency of its own methods and the value of new techniques.¹ The effectiveness of such a program will depend in large measure on the success of the civil service agency in securing full co-operation from the management of operating departments, recognition from the professions and the technical fields affected that their special interests and aims are being intelligently considered, and support from the courts and from the general public.

Social workers recognize their obligation to further the interests of sound civil service administration as it affects both the total area of government operations and the more limited field of public welfare services. In dealing with civil service agencies, they will wish to keep the objectives both of their own profession and of public personnel administration in mind. The manner and form in which social workers proffer support and technical services are important.

Public personnel administration is a technical field in which social workers co-operate as specialists on the nature of social work activities and methods. To achieve valid selection of personnel for public welfare appointments, it is essential that the separate areas of competence of test expert and social worker be distinguished, and that these limitations be respected by members of both groups.

¹ See Appendix for Standards published by the Social Security Board.

In attempting to improve the methods of selecting public welfare personnel, it is important on the one hand that professional levels of performance in public welfare positions be protected, and on the other that practical conditions and needs be met. This may involve setting theoretically desirable standards, but recognizing in practice the need for temporary compromise.

The profession of social work is being challenged by the present situation to undertake the important tasks of defining the duties and responsibilities of public welfare positions; standardizing titles of positions; determining what knowledge and skills are necessary for competence in public welfare, and what preparation can be expected to produce these; deciding what training and experience are admissible substitutes for that which is most desired, and under what conditions they may be allowed; and of isolating criteria by which competence can be recognized and measured.

Competent formulation of dependable criteria and standards relating to personnel is needed by many groups and organizations in the field of social work, as well as by civil service commissions. Advisers to civil service commissions, professional associations, those charged with developing or administering certification plans, those planning training courses for social work, administrators and personnel directors in public and private agencies alike—all need such data in order to develop practical programs of selection, management, and development of staff, membership, or student body as the case may be.

The need for such definition is neither new to social work nor unrecognized by it. Groups with a special or limited purpose have for years been analyzing functions and ways of determining and measuring competence in social work positions in relationship to membership requirements, school curricula, and programs of individual agencies. The rapid development of public welfare has somewhat outdated their findings at the very inception of a broad movement to select public welfare personnel on the basis of merit—a movement that presupposes the existence of established and

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currently valid standards. Lacking these, agencies that train, examine, or employ personnel for public welfare positions are being forced to proceed on the basis of cautious guessing or wishful thinking. Thousands of people are annually being selected or rejected for public welfare positions on such bases. Social work is making efforts to remedy the situation, but in a somewhat uncoordinated and spotty way. The recent American Public Welfare Association's Job Study¹ is probably the most direct attempt to make such definitions, but its jurisdiction and its scope are limited. The three-year study of content of curricula now being conducted by the American Association of Schools of Social Work is apparently to be only a flank attack on the larger problem of establishing criteria, although it has been comprehensively planned from the point of view of its special objective. Another type of approach is the research into personnel needs which has recently been made in relation to the program of the Joint Vocational Service.² The Social Security Board, the Children's Bureau, the United States Civil Service Commission, and many state and local public welfare and civil service agencies are currently trying to redefine the content of positions, standards of preparation, and "equivalents" in equipment—all in relation to immediate needs.

The time seems ripe for some central analysis and correlation of all this effort, in such a way that any results which have been, or will be, attained will have a common denominator and therefore maximum serviceability. Since many groups of agencies have a stake in the results of such analysis and definition, the situation calls for joint effort looking toward continuous study of the progress being made, and constant check of practice with theory—a program involving minute and uninterrupted scrutiny of public welfare and civil service at their line of suture. From study of what actually is, it should be possible to forecast in some degree

¹ See pp. 257, 290.

² The Future of Vocational Service for Social Workers. Report of the Special Study Committee of Joint Vocational Service, New York City, 1939.

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what is to come. Such description and forecast would facilitate the selection and training of personnel for the public field in a way that would meet more adequately both immediate and future needs.

APPENDIX

STANDARDS FOR A MERIT SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION IN STATE EMPLOYMENT SECURITY AND STATE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AGENCIES

AS PART of its responsibility for the development of proper and efficient administration in State social-security programs, the Social Security Board has from time to time formulated standards for the guidance of State agencies, indicating objective criteria of such administration. Proper and efficient administration requires clear definition of functions and assignment of responsibilities, the employment of the most competent available personnel, and the development of staff morale and individual efficiency.

Under the Social Security Act as amended, the Social Security Board has the responsibility of finding that State public-assistance plans and unemployment compensation laws approved by it provide after January 1, 1940, for necessary methods of administration, including methods relating to the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards on a merit basis. The Board is interested in the development of effective merit systems and exercises no authority over the selection, tenure of office, or compensation of any individual employed in conformity with the provisions of such systems.

These standards have been formulated in the light of the experience of State agencies already operating under merit systems. They incorporate and when in operation will supersede personnel standards previously adopted by the Social Security Board and the United States Employment Service.¹ The Board believes that continuing application of

¹ "Personnel Standards of the United States Employment Service—July 1, 1938"; "Standards for Personnel Administration in State Unemployment Compensation Agencies Adopted by the Social Security Board—December 23, 1938"; "Standards for Personnel Administration in State Public Assistance Agencies Adopted by the Social Security Board—December 23, 1938"; "Standards for Personnel Administration in State Unemployment Compensation and State Public Assistance Agencies Adopted by the Social Security Board—December 17, 1938."

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these standards will give reasonable assurance of a proper basis for personnel administration, will promote a career service, and will result in increased operating efficiency in the State agencies. In order to assist States in establishing and maintaining their merit systems under these standards, the Board will make available technical consultative service.

Rules and regulations to effectuate a merit system in accordance with these minimum standards shall be adopted by the State agencies and submitted as a part of the public-assistance plan, of the State unemployment compensation law, and of the plan for the operation of State public-employment offices, to be reviewed by the Board under the Social Security Act or the Wagner-Peyser Act. Any amendments to the rules and regulations shall be submitted in the same manner.

JURISDICTION

These standards are applicable to all personnel, both State and local, engaged in the administration of programs under titles I, III, IV, and X of the Social Security Act or under the Wagner-Peyser Act, except those hereinafter exempted. The agencies administering these programs are referred to as State agencies.

At the option of the State agency the following positions may be exempted from application of these standards: Members of the unemployment compensation and employment-service advisory councils; members of unemployment compensation appeals tribunals and boards of review representing employer and employee interests; members of the State board, and the executive head of the single State agency administering public assistance; members of the State unemployment compensation commission, and the executive head of the State department responsible for the administration of unemployment compensation and employment-service functions; a confidential secretary to any of the foregoing exempted officials; attorneys serving as legal counsel; members of local representative public-assistance boards paid only for attendance at meetings; State and local officials serving ex officio and performing incidental administrative duties in a social-security program.

MERIT-SYSTEM ORGANIZATION

If a State has a State-wide civil-service system operating under standards substantially equivalent to those herein provided, such State civil-

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service system should be applicable to the State social-security agencies as defined above.

In the absence of a State civil-service system with substantially equivalent standards, there will be established a merit system administered by an impartial body herein referred to as the Merit System Council, the members of which are appointed by the administrative agencies or by the Governor on recommendation of the administrative agencies, for stated overlapping terms, and no member of which is otherwise employed as an official or employee of any of the State agencies affected.

In the interests of economy and of efficient administration a joint merit system should serve all the State social-security agencies as defined above unless, because of special circumstances, it is not feasible to establish such a joint system.

PROHIBITION OF DISCRIMINATION

Disqualification of any person from taking an examination, from appointment to a position, from promotion, or from holding a position because of political or religious opinions or affiliations will be prohibited.

LIMITATION OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Participation of any employee of the State agencies, except those hereinbefore exempted, in political activity will be prohibited except that an employee should have the right freely to express his views as a citizen and to cast his vote. Such prohibited political activity will include in substance the activities prohibited in the rules of the United States Civil Service Commission.

CLASSIFICATION PLAN

A classification plan for all positions in the agency, based upon investigation and analysis of the duties and responsibilities of each position, will be established and maintained. The classification plan will include an appropriate title for each class of position, a description of the duties and responsibilities of positions in the class, and requirements of minimum training, experience, and other qualifications suitable for the performance of the duties of the position.

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COMPENSATION PLAN

A plan of compensation for all classes of positions in the agency will be established and maintained. Such plan will include salary schedules for the various classes in which the salary of a class is adjusted to the responsibility and difficulty of the work. The salary range for each class will consist of minimum, intervening, and maximum rates of pay to provide for salary adjustments within the range. In arriving at such salary schedules, consideration will be given to the prevailing rates for comparable positions in other departments of the State and to other relevant factors. The State administrative agencies will adopt plans for salary increases based upon quality and length of service. Salary laws and rules and regulations uniformly applicable to departments of the State government will be given consideration in the formulation of the compensation plan.

RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF PERSONNEL

All positions in the State agencies, except those hereinbefore exempted, will be filled by personnel selected on the basis of merit, and in accordance with standards and procedures set forth in rules and regulations for the merit system adopted by the State agency or the State civil-service authority.

Regulations governing the administration of examinations will include the following provisions:

Examinations will be administered by a Merit System Supervisor, appointed upon the recommendation of the Merit System Council. Qualifications for the supervisor will include training and experience in a field related to merit-system administration, and known sympathy with the principles of the merit system.

Applicants admitted to examinations will meet the minimum requirements for the positions for which they apply as set forth in the specifications for the positions.

Examinations for entrance to the service will be conducted on an open competitive basis, with adequate publicity, and with a reasonable period for filing applications.

Examinations will be practical in nature, constructed to reveal the capacity of the applicant for the position for which he is competing and his general background and related knowledge, and will be rated ob-

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jectively. A practical written test will be included, except that where exceptional qualifications of a scientific or professional character are required, and competition through an assembled examination is impracticable, an unassembled examination may be held.

Examinations will also include: A rating of training and experience for the more responsible positions; an oral examination for positions requiring frequent contact with the public, or which involve important supervisory or administrative duties; and a performance test for positions involving the operation of office machines.

The Merit System Supervisor will prepare and establish registers of eligibles in the order of their final scores and will maintain the registers, make certification of eligibility, and keep all examination records.

All positions, not specifically exempted herein, are to be filled from registers of eligibles, except for emergency and provisional appointments for limited periods. Appointments will be made by selection from a limited number of the highest available eligibles on the appropriate register.

In the absence of an appropriate register, provisional appointments may be made pending competitive examination, provided each provisional appointee is certified by the Merit System Supervisor as meeting at least the minimum qualifications established for the class of position, and further provided that no individual may receive successive provisional or emergency appointments.

Personnel selected from registers to fill permanent positions will serve a fixed probationary period. Permanent appointment will be based upon an evaluation in writing of the performance of the employee during the probationary period.

An employee of an agency who has received appointment under a merit system with standards substantially comparable to these, will not be required to take a new examination for the position to which he was appointed.

An employee of an agency in which no comparable merit system has been in operation may obtain status in his present position either through open competitive or qualifying examination as specified in the merit-system rules and regulations. Such rules and regulations may permit an employee in the service of the agency on the date of the issuance of these standards to be automatically admitted to the examination

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covering the position he held on such date, and may permit him to be retained at the discretion of the State agency, providing he attains a passing grade in such examination.

PROMOTIONS

Whenever practicable a vacancy will be filled by promotion of a qualified permanent employee of the agency upon the basis of capacity, and quality and length of service.

Eligibility of an employee for promotion will be determined on recommendation of the agency and certification by the Merit System Supervisor that the employee meets the minimum requirements and is qualified for promotion to the class of position in question.

FURLOUGHES AND SEPARATIONS

Regulations will be established by the agencies governing furloughs, suspensions, and separations, and governing leaves and the conditions for payment of salary at termination of services.

Employees who have completed the required probationary period of appointment and acquire permanent status will not be subject to removal except for cause, unless separated for reasons of curtailment of work or lack of funds. In the event of removal, permanent employees will have the right of appeal to an impartial body through an established procedure provided for in the merit-system rules.

SERVICE RATINGS

A system of periodic service ratings for the evaluation of performance will be maintained. The manner in which such ratings are to be used in promotions, salary increases, and separations will be provided for by agency regulation.

PERSONNEL RECORDS AND REPORTS

Such personnel records as are necessary for the proper maintenance of a merit system and effective personnel administration will be maintained by the State administrative agency. Periodic reports will be published by the Merit System Council.

Federal Security Agency, Social Security Board.

November 1, 1939.

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In addition to the references cited, the following also frequently contain material of interest:

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 - American Public Welfare Association
 - Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada
 - Public Administration Service
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 - National Civil Service Reform League and local allied associations
- Journals of the several professional associations
- Journals on psychology, personnel, civic affairs
- Reports and studies of municipal, state, county, and federal civil service commissions
- The sections on personnel in state plans for Public Assistance Departments in the several states
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4. Fuller, Florence, The Need for a "United Front," pp. 45-48.

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