PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The Profession of Public Service. In introducing the subject of this paper, it is held that we have failed, on the whole, to develop the public service as a well-recognized professional calling in this country, although it is not denied that preliminary steps toward this goal have been taken here and there, and particularly during the past few years. The position is probably tenable that more progress has been made in this direction in the last decade than in any preceding period since Jackson, not excepting the decade from 1883 to 1893 when civil service commissions were first installed. Jackson's famous statement: "The duties of all public officers are, or at least should be, made so plain and simple that men of intelligence may readily qualify themselves for their performance, and I cannot but believe that more is lost by the long continuance of men in office than is generally to be gained by their experience," has apparently been perennially accepted by the general public. This can be readily observed in our practice of easing great bodies of public employees both into and out of the service whenever a political turnover takes place, and this often despite civil service laws. Allowance should, of course, be made for those government jurisdictions which set up reasonably high entrance standards and give a measure of protection to those with a civil service status, but even in such jurisdictions the higher and more desirable positions are ordinarily reserved for birds of passage, whose movements are largely determined by the air currents that prevail in the political atmosphere.

A second characteristic is the relatively low regard in which the public service is traditionally held by the public at large. In support of this assertion, one may cite statements made by two United States senators, both significant because of being typical. In 1920, one of them was questioned as to whether his son was still in the Treasury Department. He had been employed there during the War. The Senator's reply was that "the public service is no place for a bright young man." A year or two ago, a senator from an Eastern state told of the following experience with a roommate of his son who was studying in a prominent private school for boys. The roommate asked the Senator what his business was and later, when the father expressed surprise that the son had not told his roommate of his occupation, the boy explained his reticence as due to the fact that "that sort of thing doesn't stand very well around here."

More substantial evidence has been brought together in the surveys made by Leonard D. White at Chicago on the prestige of the public service. He investigated the attitudes of a number of Chicago men and women representative of various classes of society. Many are familiar with Mr. White's findings, which went to show that from the point of view of a number of desirable qualities and behaviors, private employment was
rated higher than public employment by the majority of those inter-
viewed.

It is true that in the past three or four years, promising young men and
women, and some older ones, have been glad enough to accept appoint-
ment under a government in the absence of other occupational opportuni-
ties. Furthermore, relatively few people have failed to relinquish some-
what their traditional viewpoint that government is a necessary evil, 
since the government has come to the aid of such broad strata of our 
population in a very substantial way. Moreover, related to this realization 
of the importance of public functions, there is a growing appreciation of 
the need for recruiting men and women of broad ability and real promise 
into the service. The term "career service" has been coined and, through 
the activities of the Commission of Inquiry on Public Service Personnel 
and the League of Women Voters, has gained a currency which gives 
much promise of a new chapter in the civil service story of this country. 
With the changed attitude of the public, and with the improved quality 
of personnel, it may well be that the United States will take its place 
alongside the other progressive nations of the world in which public serv-
ants have long enjoyed social standing of a high order.

Perhaps the most hopeful sign of this development is the attention 
given to the recruitment and training of promising young people for ad-
ministration itself. Leadership in this movement has been assumed by 
the United States Civil Service Commission under the stimulus of Leo-
nard D. White. Up and down the land, colleges and universities are work-
ing out curricula looking toward this end. The most striking recent develop-
ment is the announcement of special training courses at the Littauer 
School at Harvard. If the movement goes forward unimpeached by political 
interference and bears the fruit that one may reasonably anticipate, not 
alone will there ultimately be an improvement in the management of 
government, but career administrators can by virtue of their positions 
provide the necessary leadership for the growth of a professional con-
sciousness which has been so lacking in many areas, and which must be 
present in the minds of the great body of civil servants before a worthy 
profession can emerge.

With these introductory remarks, we may turn to a consideration of 
those characteristics and factors which are required in any profession. 
The key factors may be summarized in the following way: (1) a common 
body of knowledge, of techniques and skills; (2) an esprit de corps (corpo-
rate spirit); (3) a code of professional ethics; and (4) as a part of this 
code, the adoption of the attitude of impartiality, requiring that all mem-
ers of the public be served without fear or favor. These various points 
will now be enlarged upon with some reference to present-day conditions.

A Common Body of Knowledge. A profession is like a trade in that its
members must have acquired certain skills that set them apart from the so-called laymen. On the whole, the easier it is to qualify for a calling, the more difficult it is to develop a professional sense and pride. For some years, the City Managers' Association has been seeking to develop and standardize the professional status of its members, but, with the continued influx of politically qualified, as opposed to the technically qualified, managers into the ranks of this calling, it has been impossible to erect entrance bars that could not easily be hurdled. This has proved a serious handicap to the development of a professional status.

It is a matter of common knowledge that the recognized professions have relatively high requirements for training, which is usually supplemented by an apprenticeship or internship. Reference may be made to the medical, the engineering, and the legal professions. Entrance into these is conditioned by the holding of degrees from recognized institutions, and in some of them full status is granted only after a number of years of service in the practice of the calling.

On account of the great variety of subordinate positions in government for which most meagre schooling and other requirements are set up, it is not easy to meet what is considered the first condition of an exclusive calling. This handicap might be overcome by prescribing a certain number of years of satisfactory service before acceptance into full standing in the profession of public service. Such a period would correspond to the apprenticeship period, so commonly encountered in various crafts. Attention is directed at this point to the general lack of anything approaching the apprenticeship idea in governmental callings in this country. This contrasts with the systems found in foreign countries, where, for certain classes, the apprenticeship may cover from one to three years.

Even the probationary period, restricted as it is from the point of view of time, might partially serve as a bar or hurdle for professional standing; but, as is well known, probation is a trying out only in name. If there ever was a dead letter law or regulation, it is the one prescribing a period of probation for new appointees to public positions.

Making due allowance for exceptional jurisdictions and exceptional positions, it may be concluded, in general, that entrance into the service is made easy, that probation and apprenticeship programs are notable for their absence, that training is widely ignored, that promotional policies are applied in a haphazard manner, and, topping it all, that many chief executives and their assistants who are in positions to correct such shortcomings are themselves not properly qualified for their responsibilities. Under such circumstances, no great amount of insight is required to understand the difficulties of developing a policy of exclusiveness which is derived from common knowledge and skills, and which is one of the essential characteristics of a profession.
Esprit de Corps. The second factor is the presence of a corporate spirit, an esprit de corps. For the best development of this spirit, organization of some sort is practically mandatory, but the organization of public employees with us has proceeded only slowly and in a very spotty way. This applies particularly to the professional and supervisory classes of officials, the natural leaders, who have been inclined to fight shy of organizing, perhaps because it smacks too much of trade unionism, at which most of us have been inclined, until recently, to look askance. Now that the Supreme Court has blessed the Wagner Act, it may be that the oncoming generation will no longer be schooled to consider with suspicion the organization of the employed, whether private or public.

Some years ago, the absence of organization and the advantages of organization were brought home to the writer in connection with a plan launched by a prominent federal administrator for bringing together top men in the administration at Washington. President Roosevelt was at that time assistant secretary of the Navy. He took upon himself the sponsorship of this movement and set the ball rolling. In introducing the proposal for the organization of a so-called Federal Club, he addressed some 250 to 300 men, calling attention to the fact that although they were the brains of the administration of the government, they enjoyed no recognized standing in the community, they did not know one another to any considerable extent, and they exercised no concerted influence. For a period of time, the Federal Club flourished and made itself count in a very real way in federal affairs. For example, its committee analyzed and criticized the Reclassification Act and made constructive suggestions such as no other officials might have made, and by virtue of the character of the men involved, secured a hearing such as no other group could have secured.

Within comparatively recent times, the leagues of municipalities have been bringing together municipal officials engaged in like occupations and, either in general meetings or in special training sections, have given them opportunities to interchange ideas and, under the leadership of outstanding specialists, have given them new ideas to reflect upon. In some cases, officials with like responsibilities have organized independently and have gained a sense of professional consciousness that has contributed materially to their esprit de corps.

Of equal, if not greater, importance is the establishment of national organizations of city managers, municipal finance officials, civil service officials, chiefs of police, and other groups. These national organizations maintain their own secretariats, which carry on a certain amount of research work and publish independent organs. As a consequence, new standards are emerging, knowledge of the best procedures is being disseminated, and generally the class-consciousness—to use the term in its
broad significance—of those identified with these associations is taking form.

In the state area, the Council of State Governments has also been active in the stimulation of the organization of certain state employees on the basis of callings. It is probable that this agency will carry on some such program for state officials on a national basis as have the associations of municipal officials whose offices are centralized in Chicago. In this category is also to be listed the Institute of Government, held now for six or eight years at Los Angeles under the auspices of the University of Southern California. Here are gathered each year from the four corners of the state many specialists in rather narrow fields. But they find that specialties impinge on one another and that the specialists themselves have a whole gamut of problems which call for mutual understanding and a co-operative attack. A real cross-fertilization of ideas is under way, and meanwhile it is found that whatever special interests may be represented, all have something in common. No observer will doubt that this unique Institute of Government is a real builder of esprit de corps in the public service of the areas represented. Such a spirit is a by-product of the whole enterprise, but perhaps as important as the product itself, which, in the terms of the program, is a solution of a number of more or less specific problems.

By way of an aside, may not the question be raised: With what group of men and women engaged in a common enterprise should it be easier to develop an esprit de corps than among those who are engaged in serving the public? The ultimate binder cannot be pecuniary rewards and personal profits as it is in all private enterprise, if for no other reason than that public employees, like the monks of old, are called upon to subscribe to the vow of poverty. They not only may, but they must, find a considerable part of their compensation in the satisfactions of their jobs. Under proper leadership, there is no known group of workers whose loyalty and esprit de corps can so easily be stimulated.

I recall some years ago when Will Hays as Postmaster-General laid the ground-work of a service program through the organization of the Human Relations Department, as he called it. By this means he put heart into the three hundred thousand workers in the Post Office Department. In his enthusiasm, he concluded that by bringing home to his staff the worth-whileness of their work and arousing in them some sense of partnership in a great enterprise, he had added the equivalent of fifty thousand workers to the force of the Department. There was probably not a humble letter-carrier in the United States who did not get a new spring in his step because of this program.

Several years ago I had occasion to see at first hand something of the esprit de corps of the American Telephone and Telegraph workers, and
of those on the payrolls of the General Electric and the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Companies, and could not help envying for the public service something of their enthusiasm and loyalty. There is no reason to doubt that, under proper leadership and stimulus, as much or more enthusiasm and loyalty might be engendered in the public service; for here there need be no suspicion that those responsible for such a movement may personally profit in a material way from the greater efficiency that will flow from a new spirit. Loyalty to the service and loyalty to one's fellows are, I would conclude, much easier to engender where the pecuniary motive does not enter in. Standards of loyalty are one of the best earmarks of a worth-while 

\textit{esprit de corps}.

In closing this section, I would refer to a development that might well flow from the activities of organizations to which I have just referred. There is bound to result, not alone from the rubbing of shoulders of people of like interests, but from the consideration of thoughtful papers and the informal interchange of ideas, a deeper and more conscious comprehension of the common task and a sharper definition of the philosophy that underlies and comprehends government service. For years I have envied the British their Institute of Public Administration and the Germans their national associations of public officials, and no less the publications of their proceedings, which deal not alone with practical problems but also with the broad philosophy of their callings and the relationships of the latter to national life. In view of recent developments in this country, there is reason to hope that we may sometime have a body which will compare with those just mentioned and will have an organ of opinion that will find its place on the shelves of the leading public administrators of the world. I cannot stress too much the value of a broad philosophy of the public service as a means of building up an \textit{esprit de corps}.

Another function of organizations is the development of constructive programs of reform for the public service. The activities of the American Tax Association may serve to illustrate what I here have in mind. There is every reason to expect that serious-minded and devoted public servants who are banded together on the basis of common interest in one or more important functions of government should be the source of constructive ideas and should be consulted on major issues arising in connection with their special fields. According to Leonard D. White, some of the civil servant organizations in England have become unofficial "instruments of administration."

One special phase of administration that might well enlist the attention of those officially engaged in government is the development of an administrative code for public personnel in which the rights and duties of civil servants should be definitely formulated and procedures prescribed for the defense of public employees in their rights and for penalties in the
case of violation of their duties. This would, of course, call for the establishment of official reviewing agencies so constituted that their authority and competency would be generally recognized. Although those sponsoring such a program might lay themselves open to the charge of self-interest, it is the writer's conviction that this plan is fully justifiable in the name of public interest.

A further function is the defense of the members of an organization against attack from other special interest groups, from the press, and from the political fraternity. I recall that some years ago, when the question of a standardized and up-to-date salary scale was being debated in Congress, Senator Reed Smoot of Utah seemed to take peculiar pleasure in denouncing the federal employees as tax-eaters, leave-takers, and clock-watchers. That there were such in the federal service at the time, and are such at present, may probably be taken for granted, but Smoot's scathing and sweeping generalizations could, I believe, not be supported by proof. It is entirely suitable that organizations, through proper publicity, should come to their own defense and assume the task of informing the public as to the justice or injustice of attacks on the service to which their lives are devoted.

**Code of Ethics.** The third major characteristic in my series is the adoption of a code of ethics. There is no characteristic of a profession about which there is more likely to be universal agreement than this—that principles and ideals take precedence over pecuniary gain and personal advantage. Some years ago, Professor Heerman of Yale made an analysis of all codes of ethics extant at the time for business organizations. In practically all cases, the idea of service to the public was emphasized and loyalty to standards given a prominent place. How seriously these mandates of business codes were taken, I do not need to say, but they surely will have a leading place in the codes of ethics of groups of public servants. Perhaps one of the best illustrations of the acceptance of principles and ideals as taking precedence over personal advantage and convenience is to be found in the life of the old-fashioned general practitioner of medicine whose code forces him out in the middle of a stormy night to give assistance to whomsoever calls, whether rich or poor. There are numerous public servants who accept the dictates of their code with the same unquestioning and selfless devotion.

Although each member of the profession is the keeper of the code, its long-run maintenance occasionally calls for disciplinary measures which should be judicially applied by a properly constituted body acting under prescribed procedures against those who violate it. Just as lawyers are disbarred for certain well-recognized offenses and according to standard procedures, so should violators of the public service code be disbarred for behavior not becoming the profession.
It must be apparent that such a policy calls for an established code and definitely prescribed methods for upholding and enforcing it. Almost no attention has been devoted to this matter. The attempt to do for the public service what Professor Heermance did for business would, I judge, result in a very thin and sparse volume. Offhand, I think only of the codes of ethics of teachers and city managers. The latter was prepared by the City Manager's Association some years ago. I am sure that careful investigation would show that various public servant groups have their codes of ethics, but that they have never been formulated and reduced to writing. I would suggest that it would be a wholesome procedure for any association of public officials to give careful thought to the formulation of a code suited to the peculiarities of the association and its membership. This would go far toward stimulating a professional esprit de corps.

The central and dominating theme of any professional code for civil servants will be the public interest. In all the procedural complications of government service and under the stresses and strains of conflicting pressure groups and of individuals seeking preferential treatment, the guiding star of the professionally-minded civil servant will be the public interest. This theme will be reflected in each of the articles constituting the code. It will be the touchstone for testing the behaviors of those living under it, whether in inter-official or official-public relationships.

In a going democracy, the latter cannot be over-stressed. Keeping the channels open between the public servant and the public served is the surest safeguard against evils of bureaucracy and the menace of fascism. Public administrators are prone to forget that the exercise of discretion, the formulation and enforcement of rules, regulations, and even the laws themselves, are a means to an end—the satisfaction of the public's desires. Efficiency we must have and regularity we must have, but neither of these, nor both of them together, can serve as a substitute for the end-goal of democratic government—the service of the public. Official-public relationships cannot fail, therefore, to merit the attention of the code-drafters of the future.

Under a satisfactory code, emphasis will be placed also upon the matter of personal integrity. Like Caesar's wife, the civil servant must be in all respects "above suspicion." This was brought to the attention of the public a short time ago when President Roosevelt expressed his belief that speculative activities on the part of federal employees should be banned. It is taken for granted that, even in their private dealings, public servants should maintain higher standards than their confreres in private life. The British expect of their public officials what Leonard D. White has called a fastidious sense of the fitness of things, a nicety and jealousy of their honor that go well beyond current conventions and social rules. Again we are reminded that by virtue of his calling, the public employee
represents a special class which carries with it its own noblesse oblige.

Impartiality. An integral part of a code of ethics is the requirement that public servants must be devoted to the services of the whole public, performing their tasks impartially and without fear or favor. This topic is treated separate and apart from the preceding because of its expanding significance in an era when more and more discretion is vested in public officials, and perhaps too because of the frequency with which it is violated. There is, in my opinion, no greater monument to the tolerant and long-suffering spirit of the American people than its willingness to put up with a partisan administration of the law in a democratic country. There is probably no one now employed in a governmental position who has not many times found himself under obligation, or under temptation, to grant favors to members of the dominant party or of the oligarchy of rich and influential families in the constituency in which he is employed. I believe that no tendency in American government has contributed more to the widespread distrust of government than is associated with this abuse. What is more, there is nothing more destructive of morale in an individual or of a group than this—that the public official should fail to perform his bounden duty because of some real or assumed pressure from influential quarters.

Enforcing law or dispensing justice with an "uneven" hand undermines at one and the same time one's self-respect and his pride in office, and ultimately may undermine the democratic government itself. I need only mention the abuse in connection with automobile regulations for violation of parking and speeding ordinances, the favoritism practiced in many an assessor's office, the partisan enforcement of election laws on the part of inspectors, the subterranean influences that are likely to flow into the prosecuting attorney's office, even into the very chambers of the court. Reference might also be made to the way in which we tolerate active partisan participation in primaries and in elections by public employees. I have seen city halls practically deserted on election day because the public servants had been called upon to become party workers. Could anything be more incongruous than that those whose salaries are paid by Democrats and Republicans alike should neglect their public duty and devote their time—which is the public's time—to advancing the interests of one or the other party? Related to this is the custom found in many places whereby money assessments are levied against the wages and salaries of public servants by the party in power. Organized public servants should come to grips with practices of this sort on the ground that they are incompatible with the mandate of impartiality, a primary mandate to those engaged in public callings. It would take but little publicity to ban such practices to the realm of forgotten things.

We might well take a leaf out of the book of the civil servants in Great
Britain, whose impartiality, whether serving under a Labor or a Conservative government, is simply accepted as a matter of course. Sidney Webb, who was a member of the first Labor government in England in 1923, has paid a glowing tribute to the "loyalty, fidelity, and zeal" of the civil service. Although the permanent staff was called upon to modify sharply the general course of the British ship of state, and perhaps contrary to its own convictions, its members advised their new masters with the same resourcefulness and devotion as they had the cabinet of the former government. When may we expect adoption of the policy of neutrality and impartiality as a matter of course among the whole rank and file of our civil service?

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, I would refer to the growing significance of public callings in this changing world. The traditional assumption in this country is that government employees are not productive and that government and all of its works are a necessary evil. This position should be challenged in season and out in the organs of associations of public workers as well as by their spokesmen. I am reminded of a report of what happened in the city of Berlin in 1919 when all of the city employees went on a strike. It is recorded that within the space of three weeks the city was on the verge of chaos, of brigandage, of epidemics, of destruction by fire. There was a dearth of water in certain parts of the city. At night, parts were in darkness. In a word, the withdrawal of the city services might be likened to the withdrawal of the skeleton framework of the human body. It threatens a collapse of the whole structure.

When one considers the extent to which, even in this country dominated by the inherited belief that the least governed country is the best, government has been charged with broader and broader responsibilities, the analogy to the skeleton and the body is more and more true, not alone within the municipal sphere but as to state and federal governments themselves. It has been amply demonstrated that the untrammeled seeking of personal profit in a so-called competitive system does not result in the public weal, as was assumed by Adam Smith and his successors. Whether this might eventuate over, not decades, but centuries of time, we shall never know, because through the will of the people the government has now definitely undertaken to advance the public weal directly, even in the economic sphere, under powers delegated to it and with the resources of the nation at its disposal. I hardly need to suggest that we find ourselves today in a period of great social change. Great forces are in conflict. The course that we are to follow is uncertain, but New Deal or no New Deal, the directing and controlling agency of this social change is the government. It is my belief that no administration, however conservative it may be, will be able to abrogate this fact.

It is this challenge that public employees may well bear in mind. They
find themselves today aligned at the forefront of a changing society. The governments with which they are associated are the primary instruments making for order and orderliness in the progress of this change. Whatever our theorists may say, the government and the administration and enforcement of its laws are the men and women who are carrying on governmental functions. No law can make them abler or better than they are at any given time. Upon their devotion to the public cause, upon their intelligence, and, I would stress, upon their creative intelligence, will depend the smoothness and success and soundness of this movement. When one says that society is in a crisis, one says that government is in a crisis. Our civil servants will be tested as has no other generation of public employees. In view of the critical importance of the calling with which they are identified, there is more reason today than ever before for them to become professionally conscious, for them to develop professional standards, and to contribute to the prestige of the public service through the up-building of their personal prestige and that of those with whom they are associated.

William E. Mosher.

Syracuse University.