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INSTITUTIONAL MANAGEMENT AND THE HOME ECONOMIST¹

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We are on the threshold of a new technique in education for adults as well as for little children. In certain outstanding places throughout this country this technique has been developing in institutions not under public control and hence free to use their resources in educational experimentation, but the application of the technique has been confined very largely to the education of small children, and the really large results that might have accrued to American life immediately have been missed. Moreover, those who have attempted to use this technique have in many cases, probably in most cases, lacked the fundamental information and training in the social and natural sciences and the arts that would have made possible a vision of the larger applications of this newer technique to the solution of the every-day problems of human relations in American life as it actually is to-day.

The chief feature of the new technique, as opposed to the old and now conventional type, is that it is based upon participation while the old depends chiefly upon rationalization. The old system (though it probably would not now admit it) in actual practice supports a theory that reason is a source of knowledge independent of sense perceptions and experience. The new does not underestimate the value of rationalization and intellection but recognizes their limitations in teaching all types of citizenship participations and attitudes.

Applied to our problem and to institutional life, what is the significance of the new technique for the home economist and for the administrator? Briefly it is this: the home economist will no longer rely implicitly upon intellectualizing home standards and desirable home activities, expecting

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that as a result of having so intellectualized such situations, but without having participated therein, our young people will adopt new routines in daily life. As a matter of fact, while intellectualizing standards and routines of living according to the program of the home economists, most of these young people continue to live, as do the untrained, very largely according to the routines of the households in which they spent the plastic years of youth. Many a young woman to-day gets her daily instruction in the laboratories and classrooms of the home economics departments of our best educational institutions, but lives in the haphazard environment of a loosely-organized and inexpertly-conducted dormitory, sorority house, or boarding house, never seemingly particularly sensitive to relations that might carry over from her instruction to her regimen of living, sinking back (sometimes, unfortunately, with some sense of relief) from her department work to her ordinary routine. Through her instruction she becomes a very competent critic of home standards, but she keeps what she has learned well detached from her daily life and she treats it purely as an agreeable academic accomplishment, not as a program of daily participations in "more sane, more human, beautiful, and efficient living." These young women cheat themselves out of the real joys of living for which they were thought to be preparing themselves, not from lack of willingness to accept the best they know but because of a wrong technique in education.

This attitude is as true generally in citizenship relationships as it is in daily life routines. Those who, using the old technique, place their faith in training for American citizenship solely through intellectualizing the Constitution and the associated courses of study in civics are similarly destined to be disappointed. Their students may be fine critics, excellent intellectualizers, but inexperienced and haphazard participators in the daily activities and routine of American citizenship and, as in the case above, they may cheat themselves out of the really distinctive joys of American life. The "side-line" critic is not what we need in American life to-day in large numbers. What we want is people who "get into the game" themselves.

How can this new technique be made effective in institutional management? It can be done only by actual participation in institutional management. Why do departments of institutional management seldom engage in that important duty to the fullest extent in their own institutions? Largely for two reasons.

In most cases the administrators of those same institutions are themselves the product of the old technique and look upon administration

purely as organization and upon organization as detached from instruction. To them institutional management is another detached, purely academic unit as is history or Latin or chemistry. The conception that institutional management might have some vital relationship in the management of one's own institution seems never to emerge. This is entirely logical and entirely psychological if viewed in the light of the fact that our administrators themselves, as has been stated above, are the victims of the old rationalistic school.

The second reason for the condition is the same as the first, only the application is different. Our home economists for the most part were teachers before becoming administrators. As teachers they were brought up under the old school. Many as teachers had so thoroughly accepted a fictitious standard in regard to the all-powerful influence of classroom teaching according to the old methods that unwittingly it had become almost a superstition with them. Despite subsequent scientific training, the old attitude carried over and, again unwittingly, it directed them toward dogmatic methods in administration and application of the principles of institutional management. To such an extent has this been true that institutional management has in many cases failed to vitalize its own institutional life, has remained academic, and has been dubbed by administrators unpractical and purely theoretical, and the tragedy in the situation is that often the accusation has been true, in part at least.

To meet this situation, what remedies may we now propose?

The solution of the problem is quite simple. The contribution which the home economist is prepared to make may be utilized in institutional life, first by admitting the home economists to a part in administration and extending their sphere of activities beyond instruction, either by placing them in the relationships of "consulting engineer" in institutional life or by actually granting such specialists the rank of director of institutional life in the administrative group. Under such conditions the instrumentalities for health, housing, food, recreation, social life, and the rest may be made to function as supplemental laboratories for instruction in home sciences and arts, and the benefits of expert management will be made to contribute to the personal welfare of all students, making them saner, happier, and more efficient citizens. The trained expert should be placed directly or indirectly in charge of all of the above instrumentalities. Cooperating in the health education program she should assume complete charge of all food service, authoritatively on the campus and as advisor beyond its limits, so that her special knowledge may contribute to the maintenance of better health conditions not

only by assuring proper diet but also by the control of hours of sleep and rest and the other environmental conditions which affect nutrition in general. Supplementing this will be the control of special diets for "overweights" and "underweights" and for students under treatment for digestive disorders.

As the director of housing the home economist will further be in a position to direct the proper equipment and maintenance of students' rooms, and the general hygiene in housing conditions so that consistent standards may be maintained for all at a reasonable cost. In connection with both food service and housing she should be the consulting expert on the use and supervision of all student help so that such service may be of mutual benefit to students and to their employers. In social life and in recreation not of the physical exercise type, the home economist should utilize the art resources of her department so that they will contribute to new standards in the utilization of art for recreational ends and for raising the environmental standards of all social activities. Such use of the special arts under her control should even extend beyond environmental and service problems to those of individual and personal direction in clothing appreciation and in the hygiene of clothing. The training of the tastes of students in the selection and combination of color, of material, and of design, constitute an important educational opportunity which should not be underestimated. Many of the most difficult problems confronting deans of women will find their permanent solution only through the utilization of the resources under the control and direction of the home economist. When all of the departmental cooperations above suggested have been placed upon a sound administrative basis it will be shown that experts bring infinitely larger and more permanent results without increasing the budgets of either the institution or the student, and that a new standard of living and behavior is the result of scientific method and the new technique. The administrator will find that the machinery of regulation has given place to permanent facilities for living, that the daily routines of living have become supplemental instrumentalities assisting in instruction, that absences, retardations, and random activities have given place to normal, self-directing, constructive citizenship participations, which is true economy. In this way, as a beginning in the application of a new technique, home economists will have made another large contribution to their main objective expressed in the definition of their purpose, "to make living more sane as well as more human, beautiful, and efficient."