

cludes elements not found in the scientific method—a view which is apparently shared by many of the students of group dynamics. It is possible that the apparent conflict between these two positions is due largely to differences in the definitions of scientific method. Indeed, it is my personal opinion that Dewey's conception of scientific method is broad enough to include the methodological contributions of Professor Raup and of group dynamics. But even if it is correct, this conclusion should not blind us to the possibility that deliberation about questions of policy may require methodological resources not ordinarily comprehended under the rubric of scientific method.

Questions of policy typically involve adjustments of conflicting values and interests. The formulation of policy, therefore, entails a whole range of problems not present in the determination of matters of fact. These problems are difficult enough in any case. Certainly we cannot afford to overlook any methodological resource which might aid in their solution. If, to take a single example, role playing will help to sensitize people to the interests and perspectives of others differently situated, then it is properly a part of the discipline of group deliberation. Hence, I would conclude there is much to be gained by a broad and thorough study of both group dynamics and the methodology of group deliberation.

JOSEPH J. SCHWAB

Is Consensus Enough?

This article clarifies the reference of consensus: what it points to and what the referent is like. It then considers how the conditions can be established under which consensus can run its course.

IF consensus had not become confused with consensus over the past 30 years, the question of its sufficiency would not arise. For, disentangled from the blur of meanings into which it has fallen, consensus is visible as not merely enough, but as nothing less than the process by which warrantable conclusions and defensible decisions are ordinarily made.

But the confusion has occurred and has become more and more embodied in our thinking with the rise of sentimental liberalism and the consequent increase in use of cold-blooded processes of opinion formation. Our first task, then, is to

clarify the reference of consensus: what it points to and what the referent is like. Once that is done, we can turn from the unnecessary question of its adequacy to a serious one: how the conditions can be established under which consensus can run its course.

Is Consensus Adequate?

Let us first examine the unhappy dynamic from which the mis-taken question of the adequacy of consensus arises. This dynamic begins with some debasement of legitimate processes of enquiry. One common form of this debasement we

may call administration by manipulation. A group of men, flattered by being consulted on a problem, is supplied with a tendentious formulation of it (which masquerades as forthright) along with selected fragments of fact and selected opinions of experts. All three are designed to obscure the areas of solution unwanted by the administrator and to brighten the pathway which it is intended that the group shall follow.

The selected opinions of experts are also designed to contain provocative differences of view on matters of little moment to the conclusion which the group is intended to reach. By this means, the group is given "something to do." Its members can discuss, debate, weigh, and thus be persuaded that they are engaging in the process of consensus. Meanwhile, they are the more effectively distracted from the issues and alternatives they are not intended to perceive.

These occasions for debate serve also to initiate the affective side of consensus engineering, the process, borrowed from "group dynamics," by which committees and assemblies are led to value their fellow-feeling, their sense of "belonging," their "togetherness," so highly that agreement as such comes to be much more heavily weighted than concern about the soundness of what is agreed upon. It is unnecessary to say more about this process.

The other common debasement of legitimate enquiry we may call administration by enumeration. It consists of encouraging groups to arrive at decision whether or not they possess the requisite skill and knowledge.

Often, this unskilled pursuit of agreement occurs out of an ignorance, fostered by the pattern of American education, of the complexity of problems, of meanings and of knowledge. American education

has firmly convinced a great many of us that what is not clear and simple on first hearing or first consideration is merely obfuscated. We therefore simplify what may be complex in fact, with obvious ill-effects on the decisions we make about it.

Equally often, unskilled pursuit of decision arises from faith in the ultimate rightness of some obscure thing like Rousseau's General Will, or from loyalty to what is mistakenly believed to be the democratic process. To cite farfetched examples, the rank-and-file of an army is asked to choose a strategic plan; the faculty of a school system is asked to decide on the disposition of surplus property; the children in the fifth grade are asked to choose their textbook. There are occasions in the administration of a polity—school, town or nation—when sound reason dictates that the general will or a general belief ought to be known or ought to prevail. Thus methods of evoking a general will or bringing to light a general belief are appropriate in their place, as in the jury system, in the waging of war or in discovering causes of friction and non-cooperation.

But such methods, for all their usefulness in some situations are still only a consensus, an enumeration of common attitudes already held or brought to being by methods inaccessible to public, competent review and criticism. They are not ways to obtain the most warrantable conclusion or decision.

Such dilutions and corruptions of enquiry as these lead to the spurious problem of the adequacy of consensus. The intermediate step consists in the formation of certain habits and certain guilts familiar enough in the American scene.

From continued participation in un-

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skilled debate comes the attitude that participation is a right rather than a responsibility. We take the whole task of decision-making to ourselves, unchecked by the misfortunes which ensue, because the administrator, in his role as executor of our will, can always be blamed in lieu of blaming the quality of the decisions themselves. And we enforce our "right" to decision-making by converting the doctrine of "right" into a principle of contingent action. We will not work toward any goal or through any means which we have not, ourselves, affirmed.

From continued subjection to manipulation, on the other hand, comes incapacity for intelligent participation in the work which the decision now requires. Precisely because he has been subjected to half-truths, half-facts and simplifications, the manipulated man can see what he is supposed to do only in half-way fashion, simplified to the point that outcomes fall short of or beside the intended aim. He goes through prescribed motions which are unmodulated by clear and precise understanding of what they are intended for, or, conversely, drives blindly toward prescribed goals without having at his command those considered, alternative ways of moving toward them which adequate enquiry and discussion would have provided.

We have seen more than enough of these effects of corruption of enquiry in the schools. The former is seen when teachers are manipulated into consent to pre-chosen texts with no adequate grasp of the desiderata which have dictated the choice of these rather than other materials. We see the latter when teachers are manipulated into assent to lists of utterly ambiguous and pretentious "objectives" with little or no opportunity to understand by enquiry into alternative objectives or alternative formulations

what they imply by way of choice and treatment of materials of instruction.

Finally, from all of these, there accrue to the administrator, guilt, frustration or impotence. If he has manipulated, he is frustrated by the fact that his fine subtleties, and the assents, enthusiasms and "togetherness" which his manipulations have produced, issue in no effective action. If he has taken the responsibility for major decisions to himself, he is moved by guilts at his violation of the "democratic" process. And if he has let himself be reduced to executor and scapegoat of the general will, he is impotent before the principle of contingent action which he has evoked.

How Consensus Can Run Its Course

Little wonder that the administrator now asks, "Is consensus enough?" But little doubt too that a yea or nay will make no difference in the situation. The problem is not to supplement these processes which have been miscalled consensus. The problem is to replace them with the genuine thing.

The genuine thing is the sensitive, flexible, informed and competent processes of enquiry. This reference of the notion of consensus is visible in its parts. The *sensus* refers to the sense and sensibility required for the apprehension of matters of fact and for judgment concerning their significance and order. The *con* refers to the public character which is required of sense and sensibility by the fallibility both of enquiry itself and of the men who engage in it.

One property of enquiry, important to our purpose, consists in the fact that neither the relevant facts, nor problems, nor the boundaries of a subject-matter, are objectively given to it. Rather, they are provisionally and tentatively dis-

cerned by bringing "principles" to bear on the indiscriminated congeries of facts presented by nature. These principles consist of conceptions of the nature of a subject-matter, such as particle, wave, organism, personality, culture, civilization, plus more precise and limited terms and distinctions which operate within the larger concepts.

Different problem areas use widely different principles: notions of culture are presently inapplicable in biology; conceptions of organism effective in biology have not yet been effectively applied in the physical sciences. Since the principles differ widely and since the way in which principles are applied is determined in great degree by the character of the subject-matter and of the principles themselves, it follows that much experience is needed for enquiry in a given field. And it follows thence that experienced competence gained in one field with one set of principles is of little value in another. There is very little generalized "method" of enquiry which can be applied indifferently to any subject.

An additional gulf exists between "practical" enquiries which aim to establish policies and make decisions in restricted, concrete situations, and "theoretical" enquiries aimed at conclusions about some subject-matter in general. In science we can make our subject-matter as abstracted as we please. Galilean kinematics is about a pure body in pure fall. Neither the shape nor the texture of the body is considered, nor the medium through which it falls. The chemist's atomic weight of sodium is the atomic weight of pure sodium. But in the practical, abstraction is not possible. Practical bodies have their shape and texture, and fall through a medium with density and viscosity. The engineer's sodium is only almost pure. An administrator does

not employ a personality-type but a personality, and not a certain intellectual competence, but such a competence with a personality and a wife and domestic habits more-or-less indissolubly attached to it.

This difference between the theoretical and the practical means that even the generalizable methods of inference which operate in the sciences are not directly applicable to the practical. Nor can the "pure" knowledge of a subject-matter be applied unmodified to practical instances of it. Instead, actual experience with the practical zone itself must intervene to direct the application of theory and to modulate inference. Theory and practice differ, then, in respect of both principle and method.

The significance for our own enquiry of these points about enquiry is that they give us the reason for what we already know: that the constituency of an educational institution is not, as a rule, very effective in the formulation of policy and the making of practical decisions. Teachers, scientists, humanists, are not hired because they are good practical men, good administrators, but because they are good humanists or scientists. And qua scientists, critics, teachers or psychologists, they are not competent practical men. The training they have received in their field or vocation, so far from teaching them the modes of practical enquiry, may even constitute a block to such operations. Teachers here and there may be able practitioners, but if they are, it is from other experience, other abilities, not because of, or in correlation with, their competence as humanists and scientists.

Thus we see that if sound modes of practical enquiry are to be substituted for consensus making, the practical task of the administrator is to educate his

constituency in the arts of practical enquiry. We can also see that this education must have its affective side as well. Each individual of a constituency must discover enough of his own competency and of the usefully diverse competences of his colleagues to help wean him from his dependence on membership in a chorus of assent and from the insecurity and suspicion which breed the principle of contingent action.

But practical enquiry is an art which can be learned only by the doing. Four conditions define the necessary education for it: (a) Real problems must be undertaken. (b) They must arise in the course of a continuing enterprise. (c) They must be faced in company with men more able at the work. (d) And the "learner" must recognize and suffer the consequences, good or ill, of his choices and decisions.

This means that the ultimately practical problem of the administrator is to devise means by which these conditions can be met while yet preserving the institution from serious injury at the hands of its learning citizens.

To this end, I suggest nine precepts or principles, no one of them novel, which taken together may suggest ways in which this work could be carried on:

1. *The principle of Distributed Responsibility.* The number of committees, each with a significant work to do, shall be so increased that in a two or three year period almost all members of a constituency will have served on one. Committee work shall become as regular a part of the life of the institution as the meeting of classes.

2. *The principle of Sustained Responsibility.* Committees shall not be discharged when their decision or report is made. Instead their integrity shall be maintained through frequent consulta-

tion and participation with the administrator in the executive work emanating from their original action. Then,

3. *The principle of Responsible Review.* The consequences of major committee actions shall be reviewed by separately established committees after an appropriate interval. The reports of review committees shall be faced by original committees in full sessions of the constituency.

4. *The principle of Delegated Responsibility.* The actions of most committees shall *not* be submitted to approval by the constituency. Rather, committees shall include elected representatives of the constituency, and committees so constituted shall have delegated power to make their report directly to the administrator and follow through as per Principle 2. (Representative government is as legitimate an expression of democracy as the town meeting, and is here a principal means by which the dogma of contingent action can be challenged.)

5. *The principle of Administrative Participation.* Committees shall also contain one or two appointed members who are men already (and clearly) capable of practical decision. The administrator himself shall occasionally function as such a member.

6. *The principle of Administrative Privilege.* On receiving the recommendations of a committee operating under Principle 4, the administrator may *once* criticize a recommendation and request reconsideration. He may, of course, make comments and suggestions at any time.

7. *The principle of the Considered Report.* No committee shall submit only its recommendation. On the contrary, all reports shall describe significant alternatives considered and report the reasons for their rejection. Such reports then

form the ground for action under Principles 3 and 6.

8. *The principle of the Multiplication of Alternatives.* Existing committees, larger groups and the whole constituency shall meet often with specialists and members of other institutions who will describe, recommend or argue for modes of action different from local practice. The receiving audience shall then discuss and argue such suggestions among themselves. This procedure is to be followed, not merely for matters under consideration, but especially for matters which appear to be settled. Such querying of

existing practice shall become as much a regular part of the life of the community as committee work itself.

9. *The principle of Cherished Diversity.* Parallel with Principle 8, pilot experiments in deviant approaches to a problem shall be encouraged. One school of a system, one teacher of a staff, one section of a course, shall be encouraged to undertake deviations of its own devising and to report at the end of each pilot operation on the procedure, success and failure, and reaction to the experiment. Such experimentalism shall become a regular part of the life of the institution.

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The American School and Its Social Context

“With respect to the program of the school, the *effective social emphasis* has tended to be defined in terms of the dominant exigencies of the moment rather more than with the broad vision of a Jefferson.”

IN SEEKING a basis for the school curriculum, many persons in American education have emphasized the learner's experience. Others have stressed the need for a society-oriented curriculum. This issue of *Educational Leadership* has been planned to include a review of these two emphases, the stress on social considerations being assigned to the present article.

In the past the two emphases have tended to be set in opposition. But the school is unavoidably conditioned by the society and culture in which it operates. And the shape of that society is affected in turn by what is done in its schools.

The optimum development of the child, on which the strength of the society depends, requires certain conditions and arrangements rather than others in society. And the health and prosperity of the society, of which the child is a dependent member, also require certain things rather than others in the development of the child. Ascertainment and satisfaction of these requirements, both in specific and in general, are indispensable to sound curriculum planning and development. The focus of the present article is on selected features of the American society and their bearing in planning the program of the American

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