

# The Infancy and Childhood of Organizational Theory La théorie de l'organisation encore au stade de l'enfance

Richard C. Hodgson

Volume 22, numéro 4, 1967

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/027834ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/027834ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (imprimé)

1703-8138 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Hodgson, R. C. (1967). The Infancy and Childhood of Organizational Theory. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 22(4), 480–495. <https://doi.org/10.7202/027834ar>

Résumé de l'article

INTRODUCTION

Ce qu'on peut écrire de nos jours sur la théorie de l'organisation devient périmé en très peu de temps. La raison en est que les développements viennent habituellement des gens qui exercent la tâche de direction des organisations et que la signification théorique de ces développements n'est saisie que plus tard par les académiciens et les chargés de recherches. C'est probablement la raison pour laquelle Elton Mayo se référait aux sciences de l'organisation humaine comme « aux sciences de l'insuccès ». La théorie de l'organisation n'en est, à mon avis, qu'à ses premières expressions réelles. Pour en témoigner, j'essaierai donc de vous dire ce que cette théorie a été à date, où elle peut vous conduire et peut-être ce qu'elle pourra faire pour nous dans un avenir assez rapproché.

QUELQUES DÉVELOPPEMENTS THÉORIQUES

Max Weber

Max Weber est considéré comme le père de la théorie de l'organisation. Il a souligné la rationalité et les problèmes d'autorité qui surgissaient dans ces nouvelles formes corporatives d'organisation et qui étaient uniques à la *bureaucratie*.

*Théories sur les aspects informels d'une organisation*

Les recherches subséquentes ont mis en doute la complète rationalité des organisations et ont accordé une plus grande valeur aux rapports informels existant à l'intérieur d'une organisation.

«Scientific Management»

Une autre approche majeure à la théorie de l'organisation est représentée par cette école de pensée que cherche à promulguer des « principes d'organisation ». Ces personnes ont cherché à tirer d'expériences vécues des principes applicables à une variété de situations organisationnelles.

*La contribution de Burns et Stalker*

Après une étude de plusieurs compagnies britanniques, Burns et Stalker ont conclu que les compagnies qui réussissaient le moins fonctionnaient selon un type d'organisation qu'ils ont qualifié de *mécanique*, tandis que les compagnies qui réussissaient le plus fonctionnaient selon un type d'organisation dit *organique*. Le système « organique » se distingue de l'autre par sa plus grande flexibilité, les responsabilités et l'autorité de chacun n'étant pas clairement ni définitivement établies et les gens s'associant ensemble dans des permutations ou combinaisons les plus appropriées aux circonstances.

*La contribution de Jasinski*

La distinction établie par Jasinski entre l'axe vertical et l'axe horizontal d'une organisation se situe un peu dans le même ordre. L'axe vertical représentant les notions de pouvoir et d'autorité, l'axe horizontal représente la notion de biens et services, les insinuations sur l'axe vertical amène donc dans l'organisation une plus grande rigidité.

POUR UN NOUVEL ÉTAT D'ESPRIT

Comme le souligne Joan Woodward dans son livre, *Industrial Organization : Theory and Practice*, il n'y a aujourd'hui aucun principe d'organisation qui peut être appliqué comme dans les sciences physiques, chimiques ou médicales. Il y a certainement du bon dans tous les principes émis et les conclusions auxquelles sont arrivés tous ces maîtres de l'organisation sont certainement encore utiles aujourd'hui, dans certaines situations. Mais j'insiste sur le fait qu'il faut inciter les gens à utiliser leurs capacités naturelles de résoudre les problèmes plutôt que de les inciter à appliquer servilement des principes qui peuvent avoir constitué une recette à quelque autre phénomène.

De plus, l'emphase sur le changement ne doit pas nous faire oublier que la routine et la répétition constituent une part importante de tout travail et qu'il va continuer vraisemblablement à en être ainsi dans l'avenir prévisible.

IMPLICATIONS DES CHANGEMENTS

Il faudra veiller de plus en plus à ce que l'utilisation des systèmes électroniques pour l'obtention et la transmission de l'information serve, non pas à établir des monarchies hautement centralisées mais plutôt à établir des opérations décentralisées et organiques qui tiennent compte des meilleures caractéristiques d'une gérance participante.

Il est à craindre qu'avec ces systèmes électroniques, les gens de la haute direction choisissent un comportement où des masses de gens fonctionnent comme des automates, ceci non à cause de la technologie elle-même, mais plutôt parce qu'on aura appliqué une théorie de l'organisation du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle à l'administration d'une technologie du 21<sup>e</sup> siècle. Heureusement, il y a aujourd'hui des forces sociales qui peuvent lutter contre cette tendance.

CONCLUSION

Le modèle d'organisation du futur est, selon les principes émis plus haut, déjà en existence. Cette organisation est la N.A.S.A. Le concept de base est celui d'un groupe de personnes travaillant ensemble sur des projets, ayant l'autorité d'aller où ils ont besoin d'aller, d'obtenir l'aide dont ils pensent avoir besoin et d'effectuer le travail qu'ils sont chargés de faire. Ceci inclut le libre accès à toute information considérée nécessaire.

C'est donc aujourd'hui sur des individus capables, plutôt que sur une théorie de l'organisation en tant que telle, que nous devons faire reposer notre environnement présent et futur. Faisons donc en sorte que les organisations qui composent cette société fassent tout en leur pouvoir pour favoriser, plutôt que frustrer, la croissance et le développement de tels individus.

# The Infancy and Childhood of Organizational Theory

Richard C. Hodgson

*In the following article, the author tries, first, to make the point on the major contributions on organizational theory. He explains, after that, why he thinks this is still in about the stage of infancy, by underlining the need for a new spirit towards all those theories, where they may be going and what perhaps they will be able to do for us in the not-too-distant future.*

## Introduction

It is probably becoming trite to say that progress is getting ahead of us, but I had this fact impressed upon me in a very direct way in preparing for this session with you this afternoon. About a month ago, I had what I considered to be a well-organized and up-to-date paper on organization theory all set to go. Then, within the last two weeks, I had the good fortune — or perhaps the mis-fortune — to read three articles just published, and to see Part II of the C.B.C. program, « A Choice of Futures, » last Wednesday. All these items dealt with modern organizations, or with ideas about our organizations of the future, and they put the matter of organization theory in a significantly different light for me. So I had to tear up a paper that had become obsolete in two weeks, and begin again. This was certainly a case of progress getting ahead of *me*!

There is something very frustrating about trying to build a body of knowledge, in a scholarly way, when one's topic of interest is as dynamic as that of organizational theory. In other fields of development, such as medicine or physics, new ways of doing things are usually preceded by some sort of theoretical breakthrough, from which more effective applications and techniques flow. However, in the field

HODGSON, RICHARD C., Associate Professor of Business Administration, School of Business Administration, University of Western Ontario.
--

of organizing people to get the work of the world done in a coordinated fashion, the developments usually come from the people doing the managerial job, the theoretical significance of which is then picked up, usually some time after, by the academicians and the researchers. I sometimes feel that students of organization are like the duck that flew backwards so that it could see where it had been. This 20/20 hindsight is reflected in the length of the bibliography that each scholar is able to append to anything he should happen to write on the subject, and the longer the bibliography, the more profound the work is often considered to be. Meanwhile, the managers with the jobs to get done are the ones who are making the organization innovations, with little or no help from the people who have made it their life's work to study organizations.

I find this situation a most unproductive utilization of our resources, and I hope that some of you share in this discontent. I think you will understand why Elton Mayo referred to the sciences pertaining to human nature and human organization as the « unsuccessful sciences. » I hope I will be able to contribute something here this afternoon to add momentum to the developing successfulness — that is, *usefulness* — of these sciences, at least insofar as organization theory is concerned.

Let me add just one more *caveat*. I termed my paper, « The Infancy and Childhood of Organization Theory, » for a reason. If I were to ask you, « Of what use is an infant? » or « Tell me how to use children to increase productivity, » I think you would be offended, even shocked. We have gone beyond the evils of the early stages of the Industrial Revolution. Children in our society are, by and large, no longer used. Perhaps we have gone too far in the other direction these days, so that now young people growing up often seem to face the feeling of being *useless*, but that is not something I can go into here. Children are loved and supported, guided and taught, so that those who successfully navigate a long voyage of development can *then* become useful in carrying on the complex business of our demanding society.

I think organization theory is in about the same stage of development. Perhaps 20 years of intensive scientific work lies ahead in developing a systematic body of knowledge that will have applications that are in any way an advance over the common-sense innovations that practicing managers are trying out today. I am not sure that sufficient

resources are being allocated to the task — organization theory may turn out puny and ineffective through malnutrition alone — but let me share with you several thoughts on where organization theory has been, where it may be going, and what perhaps it will be able to do for you in the not-too-distant future.

### Some Organization Theories

As Freud is considered the grandfather of psychoanalytic psychology, so Max Weber is considered the progenitor of organization theory. As business organizations grew in size and scope, as they directed and coordinated the labour of more and more people over longer and longer periods of time, it became apparent that as functioning systems, they had very different characteristics than families, tribes or guilds, which were the basic organizational units that had previously conducted the work of the world. Weber highlighted the rationality, and the problems of authority, that were arising in these new corporate forms of organization, and that were unique to *bureaucracy*, which was the term used to label this new type of organization.

Bureaucracy has since become a dirty word, but let me just point out the significant social advance involved in the impersonal administration of an organization according to rules, designed to bring justice and equality to bear on the decision-making process in organizations, as opposed to decisions made by monarchs or war-lords whose authority was incontestable, and whose whimsies have added some pretty black pages to the history of the human race.

Subsequent research has shown that purposive organizations do not operate with complete rationality. Names such as Blau,<sup>1</sup> Gouldner,<sup>2</sup> Selznick,<sup>3</sup> Roethlisberger and Dickson<sup>4</sup> and Guest<sup>5</sup> come to mind in this latter capacity. In brief, their findings indicate that the innovative *edge* of a purposive organization is to be found more in the informal workings of an organization, rather than in the conduct of the business according to the rules laid down in the existing formal organization. I think the significance of these findings is sometimes overlooked by managers in their thinking about how best to organize their businesses, and I will return to this shortly.

Another major approach to organization theory is represented in that school of thought that seeks to promulgate « principles of organ-

ization. » Sometimes the name of «Speedy» Taylor, the father of scientific management, is associated with this approach to the understanding of organizations, but names that come more directly to my mind in this context are those of Fayol,<sup>6</sup> Urwick,<sup>7</sup> Koontz and O'Donnell.<sup>8</sup> These individuals have sought to derive inductively from their own experience in organizations, and from the study of long-established forms of organization such as the military and the Roman Catholic church, principles that can be applied to a variety of organizational situations.

From a common sense point of view, principles of organization relating to unity in the chain of command, authority and responsibility, span of control, and staff-line relations, make a lot of sense to me. The only trouble is that, the recent studies of organization structure and dynamics seem to indicate that there are no such things as principles of organization. That is, there are effective companies that apply principles of organization, and others that don't. Even more confusing, there is perhaps some tentative evidence that companies that do *not* follow established principles of organization are more successful than those that *do*.

This is a highly speculative statement, but it is supported in part by James Worthy's research in Sears-Roebuck,<sup>9</sup> in which he found that the managers of the more effective stores tended to build flatter organizations under them than the managers of the less successful stores. This meant that the more successful managers had many more people reporting directly to them than traditional span of control thinking would indicate to be proper, whereas the less successful managers built more hierarchical organizations under them, which at each level corresponded more closely to what span of control thinking would indicate to be proper. Worthy interpreted these results in terms of the flatter organization providing more meaningful, fuller and more challenging jobs, jobs with developmental and motivational potentials built in, more so than the more narrowly circumscribed jobs that existed within the more hierarchical organizations.

Next, there is the study by Burns and Stalker<sup>10</sup> of British companies, several of them seeking to enter the electronics market some time after the end of World War II. The technology involved was new, and developing rapidly, and market conditions were equally dynamic. In this setting, Burns and Stalker distinguished between the more and

less successful companies, and once more found different patterns of organizational functioning to characterize each type of company. The less successful companies operated their organizations according to a pattern that Burns and Stalker termed *mechanistic*. The more successful companies operated according to a pattern termed *organic*. In the mechanistic system, people were very clear as to what their jobs were, what they were supposed to do and what they were not supposed to do, what their authority was, to whom they reported and who reported to them. The term, « taut ship, » comes to mind in seeking to convey an overall impression of this type of organization system. In the organic system, people were not so clear as to exactly what their jobs were, and there were some anxieties expressed over this situation. They knew what had to be done and they did it, getting together with whom-ever seemed appropriate for the task at hand, for the purpose of planning, advice and coordination. In this freer flowing system, people weren't so clear as to exactly who reported to whom, for what, or what the responsibilities or authorities of each were. But there was a job to be done, and people got together informally in whatever permutations or combinations seemed most appropriate at the time. As opposed to « taut ship, » I associate the phrase, « loose and goosy, » with this latter type of organization system.

Now why should the organic organizational pattern be more effective than the mechanistic? According to chain-of-command and staff-line thinking, it should perhaps be the other way around. We can only speculate as to the answer. Immediately, the rapidly changing, developing, dynamic properties of the companies' technological and marketing environments seem to play a big part.

Jasinski<sup>11</sup> points out that there are two major dimensions of organizations, the vertical axis and the horizontal axis. The vertical axis has to do with power and authority, the horizontal with the flow of goods and services. When managers start playing the vertical game at the expense of the horizontal game, when they become more concerned with defining neat little niches for people, and making sure that nobody strays from his niche, and that communication follows *only* those lines laid down in the table of organization, then we can see how organizational problem-solving and decision-making slow down. The organization becomes rigid. It becomes slow in adapting itself to changes in the environment, and it begins to lose out in the competitive struggle with faster, more flexible, less mechanistic firms in the industry.

## For a New Spirit

What is to me a most challenging study of organizational structure and organizational performance was done by Joan Woodward, and reported in her book, *Industrial Organization: Theory and Practice*.<sup>12</sup> I recommend to you her book, while at the same time saying that I found it poorly organized, dull and a real chore to read. However, it is not in the reading of her work, but in the implications of that work, that the interests lies. So let me try to cut down on your reading load by trying to lift up a few of the implications.

If I were to ask Joan Woodward, « Are there any principles of organization that I can apply to make my business more effective and efficient? » I think her answer would be, « It all depends. » And that is where I think the real usefulness of her work begins to flow. At this stage in the development of organizational theory, there are no principles that can be applied as in physics, chemistry, engineering and medicine. In the field of organization, Woodward's findings would seem to show that we can neither reason from the particular to the general, nor from the general to the particular. We must approach each organizational problem on its own merits, so to speak, and work out solutions designed specifically to meet the particular characteristics of the problem at hand. This does not mean that researchers should give up the attempt to develop a general theory of organization, from which principles can be deduced and applied to specific situations. It does mean, however, that the practising manager that insists on applying certain principles to his organization, or unthinkingly capitulates to the persuasive organizational theories of some business consultants, has little chance of his improving the capacity of his organization. Further, the chances are equal that he might reduce the capacity of his organization to survive effectively in its environment.

It may sound to you as though I have just lead you up a blind alley, but I think of it as leading some people *out* of a blind alley, of getting them to use their native problem-solving abilities rather than slavishly applying principles that may have been sauce for someone else's goose, but might be poison for their own organizational gander. I think one thing we can learn from this is that no one knows as much about how organizations should operate as he thinks he does, that we should concentrate more on the questions we ask of our existing organizations, and less on pat answers to problems, many of which are coming

back to haunt us now because of the glib and superficial answers we applied to them sometime in the past. Remember the sign on the machine shop wall: Why is it that we never have time to do a job right, but we always have time to rework it?

I saw Buckminster Fuller on television this Sunday. He made some very insightful remarks about aging and learning. He commented that the difficulties encountered in continuing to learn as one grows older are not related primarily to aging as such, but that as one grows older, one has to unlearn an increasing number of established understandings before one can come to understand and learn something new. It is the unlearning process that is so difficult and time-consuming. It is the unlearning process that individuals tend to resist, since it often means giving up ideas that may have penetrated into the core of a person's understanding of the world around him, and letting go ideas like this means letting go part of one's concept of oneself, which can be a shattering experience that most of us would walk more than a mile to avoid.

Buckminster Fuller referred to the necessity of « debugging » his thinking so that he could move on to new ideas, deeper understandings and broader concepts of things to come. I would like to share with you a speculative attempt to « de-bug » some of the existing theory of organization, so that we all can move on to more valid and useful concepts in this field. We know enough now about managing change to realize that this will come about more through two-way discussion than through one-way lecturing, so I will confine myself to four points, plus a brief prediction on my part as to what some of the more successful business organizations of the future will be like. Then we can get on to what interests you primarily, namely, your own ideas and theories about organizations.

### **Management of Routine Activities**

First, for the management of fairly routine, unchanging activities in relatively stable environments, I can see nothing basically wrong with the customary ways of setting up and running purposive organizations. I don't believe we can argue with the success that these organizations have had in the past, or what they have produced by way of a standard of living for the people of the North Atlantic community



of nations. It is not organizing ability alone that has produced these gains. Science, technology, the ideas of equality and progress, the ethic of work and the habit of saving have all done their part, but I think most people would agree that it is within the Western culture that the ability to bring all these factors together, and make them produce, is perhaps unique in the history of mankind. The guiding principles, or theories, of such master organizers cannot have been all wrong, and there is much that is still useful today, in certain situations.

Let me add a note of emphasis to my statement about routine work. In this era of change one hears a lot of emphasis on change. I emphasized change earlier in this paper, and I will do so again before I finish. I should point out, therefore, that the bulk of man's work — and woman's work, for that matter — is basically routine and repetitive, and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. If we place all our emphasis on change, as we have been doing recently and perhaps must continue to do, then we must not be surprised if the average man gets the ideas that his work lacks value and respect in our society, and when he gets that idea, no power on earth will motivate him to perform that job properly, with the care and attention and respect that no one else pays to his job, therefore why should he?

The same applies, of course, on the home front. Why is it that so often when someone asks a wife and mother what she does, she replies with a self-depreciating attitude, « Oh, I'm just a housewife »? I am reminded of Dr. Spock's sardonic story of a young mother who was trying to get someone to look after her children so that she could complete her training in clinical psychology and get a job in a psychiatric unit looking after somebody *else's children*.

I am not against people obtaining for themselves what they consider to be meaningful work. I'm all for this. What I am concerned with is the rather narrow definition that seems to be gaining currency as to what meaningful work is. This definition places more emphasis on variety and change than most of us are going to be able to achieve.

To me, one answer, lies in raising the caliber of organizational leadership above what it tends to be today. I define leadership as the process of infusing value and direction into the lives of people in followership roles. In the last three years, I have done a lot of work with first-line managers, and the complaint I hear most of, is that they

lack meaningful direction from on top. Also, it is not unusual to discover that many of these people have worked so long without anyone in upper management communicating a sincere appreciation for work done, that many of these individuals have forgotten the meaning, and the *feeling* of the phrase.

Therefore, within the traditional *top-down* approach to organization, I believe that a general upgrading of effort could be obtained through an upgrading of organizational leadership. It is when we start to specify what that upgrading of organizational leadership should look like, that we get into areas where managers' traditional theories, or beliefs, about organization and authority start blocking new learning.

### Topic of Chance

Now let me turn back to the topic of change, and lift up a few of the implications of certain changes for the organization of the future.

It is hardly necessary with an audience like this to dwell for long on the likelihood that the rapidly developing information technologies will, when integrated into ongoing organizations, bring about so many significant changes that our theories of organization are going to have to change if we want to make sense intellectually of what is going on around us. More information will be gathered more systematically, and will be technically available to more people throughout the organization, faster, than ever before. Technically, anyone involved in a problem will have direct access to a data bank, which he can use for problem-solving and decision-making purposes, should he be permitted to do so. How we organize these technical capabilities is another matter. Traditionally, one of the best management techniques for retaining power and control in an organization is to restrict the flow of information to a chosen few, and to grant access to information not on the rational basis of its being needed to do the job, but more as a reward for good behaviour, and contingent upon continued good behaviour. The logical extension of this is to manage your computer system in such a way that a central clique of people have access to a tightly controlled data bank, to which the rest of the organization feeds the required bits of information, which makes all the decisions, and from which the rest of the organization take their orders. Behavioural science research in industry has shown in many ways that this way of organizing information flow, decision-making and direction will have disastrous

consequences for motivation and growth in the human system within the organization.

As I understand it, it is within the technical capability of computerized information systems to set up highly centralized monarchies, such as the above, or to set up decentralized, organismic operations that incorporate many of the best features of participative management as we know it today. In fact, I intend to point to such an organization in a minute. The point here is that the machines function as extensions of the sort of people we are, as do cars, rifles, drugs, and atomic energy. If we have a potential for evil, that evil can be infinitely magnified by our machines. If we have a potential for good, that potential can also be magnified through the enlightened use of technology. My only fear is that, with computer systems, the tendency of top management to play things close to the chest will be extended to the point where masses of people will be functioning as automations, not because of the technology itself, but because of 19th century organization theory being applied to the administration of 21st century technology.

Fortunately, there are social forces in motion today that will fight against this trend. This brings me to my third point: the changing nature of the human input into organizations. The times were when a man got himself an education or a trade, and once he had it, it was good for a long time, and he advanced himself on that basis. He was superior to the people under him, functionally as well as formally. Times change so rapidly these days that, five years after graduation, a man can be obsolete if he has not worked hard to keep up. There are many managers who have been too *busy* to keep up, and they not infrequently find subordinates coming to work for them who may be functionally superior to their bosses. In such a situation, if the boss thinks and acts in relation to organizational authority as did his predecessor a generation ago, he is likely to get into trouble.

I don't have to tell you that our workforce is getting more and more education. Fewer and fewer of them have experienced the Depression, and are not at all motivated by, or thankful for all the fringe benefits and security arrangements that come their way. They take them for granted, as you take for granted the air you breath. They want to go where the action is, and they want to see results coming their way real fast.

Think of the potential implications of the sizeable proportion of voters who will be younger than 25 by the year 1975. If this doesn't have some bearing on the direction that our nation decides to take, using the democratic process of decision-making, I'll eat my future all-purpose identification, social security, tax, credit, banking and cash card. There is a growing awareness in the business community that a significant portion of the bright young people who will rise to decision-making positions, either in the public or private sector of our economy, perceive business organizations as definitely *not* where the action is, or don't think about business organization at all. Means will have to be found, and I know of some efforts that are beginning in this direction, of involving young people more rapidly in meaningful work in corporations, instead of waiting for 20 years of good behaviour before letting them in on any of the action. The reason for changing some of the traditional thinking about integrating people into organizations is the most compelling reason that exists: survival in the environment.

Finally, there is a growing awareness that the established thinking about how to organize routine operations is not adequate to the task of managing change itself. Let me simply refer you to two articles in the latest issue of the Harvard Business Review: one by Russell Peterson<sup>13</sup> on new venture management in a large company, and the other by Larry Greiner<sup>14</sup> on patterns of organizational change. I think you will see that both these men have delineated processes of organizing change, neither of which correspond to the more usual « table of organization » approach to management.

### Organization of the Future

I said I would outline for you my idea of what the organization of the future will look like. Evidently, such an organization is in existence already, which again illustrates my first point that progress is getting ahead of us. That organization is NASA. James Webb, the administrator of NASA, has described some of the new organizational forms and procedures that they were forced to innovate to get the work done that NASA was charged to do.<sup>15</sup> Significantly, he reports as an aside that they got no help from books on the subject of organization, and what they came up with would probably drive any « principles of organization » theorist to distraction. Webb calls it *free-form* management, which is quite similar in my mind to what Burns and

Stalker called organic. The basic concept is that of groups of people working together on projects, having the authority to go wherever they need to go, to get the help they think they need, to perform the work they are charged to do. This includes free access to all information considered necessary, which greatly increased the *visibility* of each group within the organization. Webb had this to say on the subject:

One of the principles underlying a number of our management techniques is visibility. We decided it was important that, so far as possible, problems be identified in a manner visible to everyone involved, and that the people responsible for solving these problems be visibly identified to their colleagues.

Similarly, we wanted to achieve an approach to management in which everyone with responsibility was aware that on any decision he could consult both colleagues and superiors without delay, and without an involved system, so as to assure a common basis for almost instantaneous identification of the important elements requiring attention. We had to build individual competence and confidence that work could go on with full knowledge of the individual that his superiors were literally « looking over his shoulder » at all times.

We had to do this without discouraging initiative and innovation. In this kind of effort, there was no room for protectiveness or self-consciousness. Accordingly, we developed a number of techniques to achieve this kind of real time « over the shoulder » supervision.

The top executives of NASA discovered, as I think is communicated in the above quote, that the traditional method of management direction and control — one man, one boss — restricted them rather than helped them in their efforts. They extended their thinking so far beyond traditional approaches to organization that, in one instance, they committed what I feel some managers would consider corporate heresy. They did away with the concept of the Chief Executive. Let me again quote Webb on the subject:

The kinds of challenges that we in management are facing today do call for such new and experimental approaches to organization. One that I think worth commenting on in detail is the question of the chief executive function. In traditional organizational thinking, the structure of an organization peaked in the chief executive, who was positioned at the top of the organizational hierarchy. This concept goes back to some of the origins of modern organizational theory and practices — to the Catholic church and to the Prussian military, which are the prototypes of much of modern organizational thinking.

However, as organizations have become more complex and their challenges more interdisciplinary, it is becoming increasingly apparent

that there is nothing sacred about the notion of a single chief executive. Accordingly, there has been an increasing tendency to experiment with the idea of the multiple executive — usually in the form of the « office of the president » concept.

I think this gives you some of the flavour of things to come in the theory and practice of organization. I hope you find it interesting and challenging, rather than frightening and confusing.

Let me close by saying that there will be many managers who will never change their pet theories of organization, and most scholars of organization will be too far back in the slip-stream of organizational change to be of much help to the dynamic, innovative manager. Organizational survival and growth will continue to be, as it has been in the past, the outcome and reward for successful management by perceptive, intelligent, resourceful, confident and hard-working individuals who can see things as they are, and can formulate and implement effective solutions to problems as they come into being. It is to individuals like these, rather than to organization theory as such, that we must look for survival in our present and future environments. Let us resolve to make every effort we can to insure that the organizations that make up this society — families, schools, churches, service organizations, unions and government, *as well as* businesses — do all in their power to foster rather than frustrate the growth and development of such individuals.

### Bibliography

- 1 P.M. BLAU, *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy*, Chicago : Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957.
- 2 A.W. GOULDNER, *Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy*. Glencoe, Ill. : The Free Press, 1954.
- 3 P. SELZNICK, *T.V.A. and the Grass Roots : A Study in the Sociology of Formal Organizations*. University of California Publications in Culture and Society, Vol. 3, Univ. of California Press, 1949.
- 4 F.J. ROETHLISBERGER & W.J. DICKSON, *Management and the Worker*. Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard Univ. Press, 1956.
- 5 R.H. GUEST, *Organizational Change : The Effect of Successful Leadership*. Homewood, Ill. : Dorsey Press & Richard D. Irwin, 1962.
- 6 H. FAYOL, *General and Industrial Administration*. London : Pitman, 1959.
- 7 L. URWICK, *The Elements of Administration*. New York : Harper & Bros., 1944.
- 8 H. KOONTZ and C. O'DONNELL, *Principles of Management*. New York : McGraw-Hill, 3rd ed., 1964.

- 9 J.C. WORTHY, « Organizational Structure and Employee Morale ». *American Sociological Review*, Vol. XV, No. 2, April, 1950.
- 10 T. BURNS & G.M. STALKER, *The Management of Innovation*. London : Tavistock Publications, 1961.
- 11 F.J. JASINSKI, « Adapting Organization to New Technology » *Harvard Business Review*, Jan.-Feb., 1959.
- 12 J. WOODWARD, *Industrial Organization : Theory and Practice*. London : Oxford University Press, 1965.
- 13 R.W. PETERSON, « New Venture Management in a Large Company ». *Harvard Business Review*, May-June, 1967.
- 14 L.E. GREINER, « Patterns of Organization Change ». *Harvard Business Review*, May-June, 1967.
- 15 J.E. WEBB, « New Challenge for Organization ». *Harvard Business School Bulletin*, March-April, 1967.

## LA THÉORIE DE L'ORGANISATION ENCORE AU STADE DE L'ENFANCE

### INTRODUCTION

Ce qu'on peut écrire de nos jours sur la théorie de l'organisation devient périmé en très peu de temps. La raison en est que les développements viennent habituellement des gens qui exercent la tâche de direction des organisations et que la signification théorique de ces développements n'est saisie que plus tard par les académiciens et les chargés de recherches. C'est probablement la raison pour laquelle Elton Mayo se référerait aux sciences de l'organisation humaine comme « aux sciences de l'insuccès ». La théorie de l'organisation n'en est, à mon avis, qu'à ses premières expressions réelles. Pour en témoigner, j'essaierai donc de vous dire ce que cette théorie a été à date, où elle peut vous conduire et peut-être ce qu'elle pourra faire pour nous dans un avenir assez rapproché.

### QUELQUES DÉVELOPPEMENTS THÉORIQUES

#### *Max Weber*

Max Weber est considéré comme le père de la théorie de l'organisation. Il a souligné la rationalité et les problèmes d'autorité qui surgissaient dans ces nouvelles formes corporatives d'organisation et qui étaient uniques à la *bureaucratie*.

#### *Théories sur les aspects informels d'une organisation*

Les recherches subséquentes ont mis en doute la complète rationalité des organisations et ont accordé une plus grande valeur aux rapports informels existant à l'intérieur d'une organisation.

### « Scientific Management »

Une autre approche majeure à la théorie de l'organisation est représentée par cette école de pensée que cherche à promulguer des « principes d'organisation ». Ces personnes ont cherché à tirer d'expériences vécues des principes applicables à une variété de situations organisationnelles.

#### *La contribution de Burns et Stalker*

Après une étude de plusieurs compagnies britanniques, Burns et Stalker ont conclu que les compagnies qui réussissaient le moins fonctionnaient selon un type d'organisation qu'ils ont qualifié de *mécanique*, tandis que les compagnies qui réussissaient le plus fonctionnaient selon un type d'organisation dit *organique*. Le système « organique » se distingue de l'autre par sa plus grande flexibilité, les responsabilités et l'autorité de chacun n'étant pas clairement ni définitivement établies et les gens s'associant ensemble dans des permutations ou combinaisons les plus appropriées aux circonstances.

#### *La contribution de Jasinski*

La distinction établie par Jasinski entre l'axe vertical et l'axe horizontal d'une organisation se situe un peu dans le même ordre. L'axe vertical représentant les notions de pouvoir et d'autorité, l'axe horizontal représente la notion de biens et services, les insistances sur l'axe vertical amène donc dans l'organisation une plus grande rigidité.

#### POUR UN NOUVEL ÉTAT D'ESPRIT

Comme le souligne Joan Woodward dans son livre, *Industrial Organization : Theory and Practice*, il n'y a aujourd'hui aucun principe d'organisation qui peut être appliqué comme dans les sciences physiques, chimiques ou médicales. Il y a certainement du bon dans tous les principes émis et les conclusions auxquelles sont arrivés tous ces maîtres de l'organisation sont certainement encore utiles aujourd'hui, dans certaines situations. Mais j'insiste sur le fait qu'il faut inciter les gens à utiliser leurs capacités naturelles de résoudre les problèmes plutôt que de les inciter à appliquer servilement des principes qui peuvent avoir constitué une recette à quelque autre phénomène.

De plus, l'emphase sur le changement ne doit pas nous faire oublier que la routine et la répétition constituent une part importante de tout travail et qu'il va continuer vraisemblablement à en être ainsi dans l'avenir prévisible.

#### IMPLICATIONS DES CHANGEMENTS

Il faudra veiller de plus en plus à ce que l'utilisation des systèmes électroniques pour l'obtention et la transmission de l'information serve, non pas à établir des monarchies hautement centralisées mais plutôt à établir des opérations décentralisées et organiques qui tiennent compte des meilleures caractéristiques d'une gérance participante.



Il est à craindre qu'avec ces systèmes électroniques, les gens de la haute direction choisissent un comportement où des masses de gens fonctionnent comme des automates, ceci non à cause de la technologie elle-même, mais plutôt parce qu'on aura appliqué une théorie de l'organisation du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle à l'administration d'une technologie du 21<sup>e</sup> siècle. Heureusement, il y a aujourd'hui des forces sociales qui peuvent lutter contre cette tendance.

#### CONCLUSION

Le modèle d'organisation du futur est, selon les principes émis plus haut, déjà en existence. Cette organisation est la N.A.S.A. Le concept de base est celui d'un groupe de personnes travaillant ensemble sur des projets, ayant l'autorité d'aller où ils ont besoin d'aller, d'obtenir l'aide dont ils pensent avoir besoin et d'effectuer le travail qu'ils sont chargés de faire. Ceci inclut le libre accès à toute information considérée nécessaire.

C'est donc aujourd'hui sur des individus capables, plutôt que sur une théorie de l'organisation en tant que telle, que nous devons faire reposer notre environnement présent et futur. Faisons donc en sorte que les organisations qui composent cette société fassent tout en leur pouvoir pour favoriser, plutôt que frustrer, la croissance et le développement de tels individus.

### 23<sup>e</sup> Congrès des relations industrielles 1968

Université Laval, Québec

*les 22-23 avril 1968*

#### LE SYNDICALISME CANADIEN RÉÉVALUÉ

Objectifs syndicaux traditionnels et société nouvelle; structures syndicales et objectifs syndicaux; démocratie syndicale; rivalités syndicales: réalité, force ou faiblesse; syndicalisme et travailleurs non-syndiqués; extension de la formule syndicale à des secteurs non-traditionnels; syndicalisme et participation aux décisions économiques; syndicalisme et action politique; syndicalisme face aux problèmes de la pauvreté.

Les séances, comme d'habitude, se tiendront au Château Frontenac.

Département des relations industrielles, Université Laval