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Evaluating Technical and Human Factors in Management

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Evaluating Technical and Human Factors in Management

Emile Gosselin

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The Logic of Cost Price

Many of our establishments, factories and mills seem to accept entirely the principle that production consists of a purely technical arrangement of human and material elements which cooperate toward the realization of the product. The only logic we can find here is based on cost price and profit. According to this "rational" logic, it is necessary to produce as cheaply and profitably as possible. Therefore, it can be said, only the employer is in a position to attain effectively these objectives. It would be foolish to share such responsibilities with the workers. Only the employer can therefore assign a place to the worker of whom the presence is only justified by his productivity. In order to invite the worker to play his economic function, a salary is fixed for him, the only measure of his efficiency and his progress. The employer wants the maximum profit: that is why he builds his fac-

tories. The worker comes to the factory only to get the highest possible salary. The economic equation is therefore perfect: the highest possible profit constitutes the only stimulus of the employer and his employee. But this equation by its nature only

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leads to accepting the separation between the management of the enterprise and its workers.

This logic tied up with the highest possible profit deprives production of all its human aspect. By only working essentially for a salary based on productivity, the worker assigned to production leaves to management alone the decision, not only as to the object but also as to the very nature of his activities and this for each instant. An employer told me recently that management did not have to take into account the opinions of its workers when it assigned them their tasks. "From time to time, we have to listen to their grievances, because otherwise the Union would cause trouble. But if things continue in such a way, the workers will run everything. They should understand that we do not hire them for their opinions but for their capacity to work. We are the ones who take the risks. We are the ones to give orders. The workers should do more working and less talking. They should help us to make more profits. It is only by this that we can pay salaries. Let them work with energy and, we, the management are well able to manage them, without having to ask the advice of Tom, Dick or Harry."

The bait of profit and salary becoming for the worker the only reason for the existence of the enterprise, he agrees to accept the official methods established unilaterally by the management in order to attain the utmost productivity. The worker is only a pawn on the chessboard, a part of the machine, a tool of which the real value is only measured by dollars of production. Capital commands and takes the risks of the profit. Labour obeys without discussion. Therefore, the reason for the existence of the enterprise is identified with the wishes of its management. Too jealous of management's privileges, too interested to retain an absolute right of command, it is unfortunately forgotten that true cooperation between all the parties to production as well as the highest productivity cannot result from unilateral decisions of capital.

The Human Factor

Similar principles of "rational" production overlook the human factor, because the worker not being a machine, cannot respond in a mathematical way to the stimulus imposed by the management alone. Any enterprise constitutes a social sphere, therefore develops relationships of which the nature may counteract the economic ends, if in the setting up of the tasks and the improvement of technique the feelings of the workers are neglected. In order to succeed, every organization must create among its members a true spirit of team-work. In other words, not only is it necessary that the structure of the enterprise help the taking of decisions capable of satisfying the needs of the consumers and shareholders, but that it must make possible harmonious relationships between the management, each worker and the associations. The quality of these human relationships will depend on a number of factors interdependent and difficult to analyse separately, but which is worthwhile to comment on in their logical order:

1. The attitude adopted by management and workers towards the objectives of the enterprise.

2. The nature and function of the authority itself in the factory.

3. The information and communication channels between all those participating in production.

OBJECTIVES WELL SET AND ACCEPTED

Good human relations in the enterprise require first of all that each one be well informed of the objectives of each of the different participants. It is necessary, moreover, that these objectives must never become irreconcilable. In the case of a conflict between objectives or between alternative methods of reaching them, the enterprise itself must facilitate a solution.

Importance of Stating Clearly the Economic and Human Objectives

If the harmony of relations in an economic organization depends mainly on the attitude actually adopted by management and workers towards the desired objectives, it is important to note that the objectives themselves as well as the methods of reaching them, are not all purely economic ones. "A good accounting system and trustworthy men capable of producing efficiently are necessary" a manufacturer told me one day. "Without profit, I could not operate. But money and profit cannot satisfy all the ambitions of a manufacturer. I have a family, a social position, and without profits I could not satisfy my ambitions and look after the needs of those around me."

The same manufacturer then told me that managing the factory put him in contact with many people and led him to discuss with them many subjects which they had in common. Thus, he occupied functions in financial, commercial and other associations; he judged it to be

very important, for himself and for his business, that he accomplish well all social functions that were entrusted to him. Going every day to the factory, gave him the impression of rendering service to society, to his own family as well as to the workers he directed. "I do not like to manage for the pleasure of managing. It is perhaps difficult to explain, but I particularly like to surround myself with good men who have their own ideas, but who can finally agree on the decisions and afterwards work together by common consent to realize them. To work is always hard, but to work all together, becomes almost a pleasure, when we know where we are going and that we have good support."

It is no doubt a difficult fact to admit, but dollars left to themselves are not able to give life to the economic system. The human factors cannot be ignored. Employers and workers are no doubt drawn by the profit motive or the salary to be made; we must, however, recognize the profound influence on the participants of such considerations as reputation, prestige, desire to retain a position, social sense, personal ambition and many stimulants or objectives that have little or nothing to do with the strict reasonings of economics. A good accounting system in particular prevents many of these considerations from having a bad effect on the business. Accounting and economics, however will never eliminate the human aspect in production.

If it is true that the members of an enterprise have many noneconomic objectives, it is important to make first of all a choice and to always realize, before and during production, that the methods chosen must be adapted to the objectives desired, even if this necessitates expenses and activities that could be avoided in the strict economic sense of the word. The enterprise appears to us in fact as a system which tends toward an equilibrium always influenced by the variations of the market, the support of the shareholders, the good will of the management and the cooperation of the employees.

A Few Solutions

The enterprise has very little influence on the forces of the market itself, but its management has full power over its production structure. If the management and the workers do not wish to acknowledge the objectives they have set up, agreement is impossible in the structure. For a time it will perhaps be possible for one of the parties to treat the other as a victim and to exploit it, but the thought of revenge would be too carefully kept to permit the improvement of relations within the enterprise without the changing of attitude on both sides. Another

solution much more advantageous in good human relations, in productivity and in dividends, consists in proposing to the management and to the employees a series of objectives, a code of human relations, a set of standards on which they could mutually agree.

I. — All work together to increase the productivity and to benefit Iabour, either by increases in wages or by social security measures on the scale of the enterprise. On the other hand the invested capital has also the right to a reasonable return, but on this subject, it must be recognized that the workers do not have to compensate by reductions in wages, the errors of judgment of the shareholders or the management. A sane economy does not go well with enterprises showing a deficit when this state is due to a poor direction of capital or a negligent management of production.

II. — Adopt in the management of business, the principle that an advantage realized by the destruction of competitors, the control of the market, the impoverishment of labour or of the consumer, brings in the long run, the destruction of the economy itself.

III. — Admit that the reasonable satisfaction of human wants (which is confirmed during production as much for the management as for the workers), is in itself an objective of the act of production; admit also that if it results in additional cost, it must be compensated, either by a more efficient management, by a closer cooperation of the elements, or by a higher price to the consumer. It would be, in fact, highly unjust on the part of the consumer to demand lower prices, if the final effect would be to lower the standards of the human beings who are the producers. It would be equally unfair for the worker or the management to suffer from bad conditions during production because of bad management or lack of cooperation which prevent the reduction of costs and consequently the realization of human objectives.

IV. — Admit that the worker has the right to lay claim that his work aid in developing his personal capacities and aptitudes. • The worker must realize that his superiors have a great interest in him, that he is considered as a man and not only as a producer. By his attitude and his bearing, the employer must show that the worker is responsible for his own welfare. Now, it is not within the divine right that the worker realize his welfare by the perfect execution of the orders of his superiors without ever asking to be consulted. It has not been proved either, that only the management's unilateral decision, without prior consultation of the worker or his union and without taking into account their feelings, is capable of ensuring the highest possible output of the

enterprise, the highest possible dividends and the most benefits to society.

AUTHORITY

We all admit the need of authority, essential condition of production. It is necessary, in fact, to coordinate all the activities in the structure in such a way as to maintain a steady balance between all the elements which cooperate toward making the product. Regardless of the political or economic organization under which we are living, there will always be someone officially at the head. Their responsibility will be particularly to direct the enterprise, to decide finally the nature of the production, to assign responsibilities to each participant and furthermore to settle the disputes and lessen the friction which might arise between the members of the enterprise.

Conditions of Efficiency

a) Capacity

The care taken to divide production responsibility well between all levels of management, must be completed by a very careful choice of the managers themselves. It is not sufficient to create positions and give certain persons the right to give orders, it is most necessary to be assured of their capacity for managing. All the cooperation inside an establishment comes first of all from the fact that the participants recognize in those managing them and in themselves the capacity to accomplish certain reasonable tasks, as much from the economic angle as from the angle of human relations. However, too many people believe that because they hold a place of authority that they have authority. I have had occasion to discover in certain establishments people who were actually giving orders but who had never been authorized to do so. Authority is such a natural thing for man that he creates it where it does not exist or is badly exercised.

b) Acceptation

One of the conditions of efficiency of authority is not only in the fact that it is attached to certain positions and entrusted to definite people but also in the fact that it must be accepted by each individual who is subject to it. In order to have their authority accepted with the maximum of efficiency the management, whether it is the president or the lowliest foreman, must know first of all exactly what they have to do and be able to state clearly their objectives. This is very important, if it is desired to entrust productive tasks to the co-participants. But what is just as important as to make the objectives and orders clear, is

to ensure that those carrying them out at all levels understand clearly the directions. Battles have been lost through lack of clarity and precision in the orders and also through lack of understanding of even the clearest directions.

c) Taking feelings into account

Management's orders must, moreover, be in accord with the personal or collective feelings of those being directed. A worker, and, in general a subordinate, may, in fact, understand very well an order, but carry it out badly or simply refuse to act. No one is automatically disposed to accept without discussion the judgment of their management in regard to the value of their orders. The person carrying out orders often fears such an action requested may hurt his personal interests, for example, his health, his future career. When the same feeling spreads to a whole group, it may result in slow-downs, waste of material, strikes. It is therefore, very important for the management to endeavour to ascertain the feelings of their workers, in particular before making decisions which, to them, are important personnally.

What counts, in short, is the feeling of the worker. If he believes that authority is against his personal interests, or against those which he shares with others, such as his right of association, the worker will hold himself on the defensive and will be reserved. If the workers unite through such a reaction, they will be seen to make very aggressive claims for remedy, quite often costly at certain moments, and all this very often because of lengthy neglect by the management.

d) Consultation

In order to fill their role with efficiency, the management must take into account the feelings of the worker. They must be sure that their decisions are well expressed and well explained to the lower levels and that their meaning is well understood by those carrying them out. If there is any danger that the orders given come into conflict with the personal and collective feelings of those affected by the decisions, it is important to increase the number of consultations between subordinates and superiors. However, an order affecting the personal situation of a participant, should never be given without a respite being granted; it is during this respite, in fact, that the nature of the change could be discussed, its necessity, its probable effect, the readjustment which will follow for the people affected. Thus, a high degree of emotional

stability will be ensured among the workers and the number of grievances will be reduced correspondingly.

Necessary Qualities of Management

The choice of the management of the enterprise, at all the levels of production is of capital importance. The action of managing requires without doubt a well-arranged structure, well-defined programmes of action, but it rests fundamentally on the decision of all the participants to unite their efforts to obtain the desired objectives. In other words, the management must not only have the enterprise's objectives accepted, but also must create among all the participants a real interest in the carrying out of the tasks, as well as the feeling of working together as a real team. For this, the management must have certain aptitudes which I shall only comment on briefly.

1) Be able to appreciate and understand the human nature of the participants. The manager must avoid being arrogant. He must rather try to understand the viewpoint of those under his control. He must be easy to speak to, courteous, patient, friendly with all.

2) Have the sense of duty. The manager, especially the one found in the higher levels of management, gives himself to the accomplishment of his task in the most efficient way possible. He remains open to progress. He must be able to accomplish his work with vitality and to make his subordinates enthusiastic; he must, however, do so, with the idea that his role is eminently social, and that his duty must be accomplished, not only to the owners, but equally towards the workers, considering them as real partners, as much on the production level as on the human level.

3) Have plenty of flexibility in the adaptation of people and programmes of action. The manager must not only have a very clear view of what he must accomplish, but in the making of programmes and setting of tasks, he must avoid too much inflexibility. If he finds a policy meets too much resistance, he must be able to re-formulate either his objectives or the method of reaching them. The manager must always keep cool in the face of sudden difficulties. He should have an inventive mind, and always know how to maintain his personal contacts with individuals and groups. He should take advantage of the advice of the co-participants, by creating at each appropriate level; organs of consultation of which the task would be particularly to keep him imformed of the normal functioning of the operations, the attitude of the participants or even to give him advice when changes become necessary. 4) Possess the capacity to estimate at their proper value the material and human factors that affect the tasks that he controls, that is, to have the ability to act, to be able to make a decision and to carry it out. For this it is necessary to have a wide-awake sense of observation and perception, a real capacity for analyzing and stating clearly the factors under examination, the courage to take responsibility and finally the assurance of the cooperation of all those who will have to carry out the decisions thus made.

This brief mention of a few of the qualifications that the manager must possess indicates clearly the profoundly human character of the act of production. The need for order, decision, system in the enterprise, the necessity for each one to operate at his own level and toward well-defined objectives, the urgency of obtaining a production which really represents the economic and social yearnings of the participants require moreover, the establishing of adequate systems of information and communication between all those cooperating towards the product.

COMMUNICATION

The system of information and communication is the various ways which the participants of the enterprise possess of making contact with each other. It is by these ways that programmes are extended, that orders are given, that reports are made. It is also by these same ways that is spread eagerness, enthusiasm, conviction and the determination to cooperate towards production as a real team. This is the nervous system of the enterprise. In a small enterprise, communication is not complicated. It is simple, direct, very spontaneous. With the coming of technology and a very advanced division of tasks, many obstacles have a tendency to hinder frequent relations between management and workers. On the other hand, the necessity for good communications increases with the complexity of each enterprise. To describe the different systems of communication which are established during production, appreciate their utility, their value, would draw us into a field beyond the scope of this study. I will restrict myself, then, especially to the characteristics that a good system of communication in the enterprise should present.

Characteristics of the System

a) Bi-lateral communications

Every good system of communication should help the making of decisions and the carrying out of orders; it makes provision, among

other things, of the consultation of the workers by their superiors. We have already seen that the action of managing implies as much the acceptance of the decisions and the willingness to cooperate, as the intelligent transmitting of orders. It is necessary for this that communications be established in both directions within the structure: from the management to the workers and from the worker to the management. Thus established, this system permits a result representing the participation of all the elements to production. In brief, systems of communication must reach all participants without exception.

b) System defined and known

The methods of communication and information must be welldefined and known by all the participants. Here we are dealing with the structure itself of authority, the delegation of power within the structure and the sharing of responsibilities. In a few words, when a manager makes a decision or gives an order, it must be within the recognized limit of his powers. If he shares a responsibility with others, or again, if his decisions have an effect on the decisions, the orders, the operations in other sectors of the structure, he must establish communication with the managers or groups of workers thus concerned. Without insisting on the subject, we can already see that joint production committees as well as frequent meetings between foremen and other managers may play a big part to this end.

c) Rapid system

It is necessary that the communication system be always wide open to all and that frequent and rapid contacts are made easy between all levels. A worker or a foreman will cooperate well if they see that their ideas are being taken into account and especially if they have frequent enough personal contacts with their superiors. If the management takes too much time to discuss or to recognize either the suggestions or the merits of a worker, a falling-off in production would soon be felt along with a contagious lack of enthusiasm and in general a passive attitude rather than a receptive one in those persons engaged in production.

d) System and social atmosphere

The system of communication must finally take into account the social atmosphere of the enterprise. It cannot be repeated too much: The enterprise is first and above all a social structure where human

beings are combined much more than tasks. The formal structure such as established by the management will be unable by itself to create a viable human group, if it does not take into account the behaviours, the attitudes, the feelings of the workers. It is therefore necessary to attach importance to the spontaneous relations which arise by themselves inside the enterprise. A wise management knows how to use all the factors that act during the course of production. It must therefore realize the importance of spontaneous groups and of associations in the enterprise. It takes into account the influence and the ideas which come from these leaders which come spontaneously from among the workers. If it is important for management to have frequent contacts with each individual as a producer, the contact is even more important when it concerns these people chosen by the workers for the promotion and the defence of their common interests; thus the system of communication established by the enterprise cannot ignore the part played by the union and its leaders.

Management and the Union

Management cannot treat the union and its officers as adversaries if they really want to take advantage of the enthusiasm of the worker. Management should rather consider the union as an aid to production. It should recognize in the union a complement to the management as established by the owners. It is therefore important for management to avoid substituting itself for the union and taking on the union's role. If management wishes peaceful relations with their workers, it is wise for it to facilitate the stability of the union itself. A stable union is a union able to render the services that the members expect from it. It is a union with which management wishes to cooperate. In order to obtain this type of relations within the enterprise, it is imperative for the management to communicate frequently with the union leaders, to inform them of changes to be made in the structure of the operations, and to ask their opinion on the programmes to be established. It is by creating an atmosphere of cooperation, rather than by impatient and aggressive claims, that management will best retain their privileges; they will thus permit the union to furnish a priceless contribution to the expansion of productivity.

They will entrust to them, moreover, and without any additional expense to the enterprise, a heavy responsibility in the creation and maintenance of that spirit of community of interests without which production would lose its true human characteristics.

TESTIMONY

The preceeding pages are partly the result of a period of research in the Maritime Provinces, during which I had the occasion of meeting employers who apply with success the principles already set forth. Other observations were also made during research in our urban centres. I am particularly pleased to tell of the case of a plant where nearly one hundred employees pack fish. Many times I have had occasion to visit this establishment, to interview the workers and their manager in order to better understand the reasons for the good relations between the participants. We spoke of the place, of their small industry in the village, of the cooperation in the plant, of the role of the employer and the worker. I had the proof in hand, that it was possible, at least in this particular case, for an employer and his workers to cooperate on the production level. I will take from my research notes the account of an interview with the employer of this plant, because it shows quite simply the reasons for the success of this enterprise. Ι would like to point out that this account was confirmed by the testimony of the workers themselves.

"When I took over this business", the president of the plant told me, "there was nothing here. Only rotten fishing-boats n huts without a roof. And all around, the young people idled in the stores. The women stayed at home when their husbands had to go away for long months to the big cities. The earth does not produce anything here, hardly enough to feed a cow, a pig and a few chickens, but that helps us. The wood is disappearing. In ten years, those who still have trees will be without revenue if they cut all their forest reserve. It is either one thing or the other. It is necessary at any price to help these people."

"Ten years ago, there was nothing here, no fishing or hardly any. The wharf was abandoned, the people were going elsewhere. The fishermen were demoralized. I thought something could be done, if everyone tried. I had a few dollars, I knew my people here, because I live on the shore. I know them all by their name. I thought that all together, we could change this poverty into a decent living."

"Many people have a head on their shoulders, but it is only to swallow everything they are told. The story here was that there was nothing left to do, except to work for wages in the cities. I calculated everything; I saw the fishermen, one after another, and we concluded that we could still try something. I thought of selling their fish fresh in New York, within forty-eight hours. This was tried, and after considerable trouble, which is quite normal, we succeeded."

"I have 50, 60 employees, sometimes less, sometimes more; it depends on the fishing. From the month of April to the fall, there are at least one hundred people who receive my cheques. I pay for their fish, I buy wood for packingcases, I buy ice, I use transportation facilities and I pay my workers."

"You see: all these men and girls are fairly well satisfied. No doubt things do not always go as they would like them, but we are all working together here. I do not have many secrets from my workers and the fishermen. They know that I get here at 6 a.m. and that I leave the plant at 10-11 at night. And I work with them. That reminds me that we all belong to the same world. When a new employee starts, I show him what to do and I interest myself in him. Five or six hours a day, sometimes longer, sometimes less, I cut fish with my workers. We are all like a family here. They know that I do not keep all the profit for myself. I tell them about my business, and they tell me theirs. I like to give a chance to my men. I try to pay them in such a way that they become conscious of themselves. When I pay, I like to see them work, but I do nit kill them at work."

"Fish smells bad but you can get used to it. We clean fish here and make it into fillets. The waste is put on a conveyor. A truck dumps it far away. Other workers break ice in which to pack the fresh fish. All my workers know what to do. I do not have to be there to make them work. I like to give them initiative. Look at that young fellow in the truck: when I took him on here, he was nothing or may be less. Well, I have made a man out of him, or rather I have told him that he will be a man if he knows how to conduct himself. He has the full responsibility of the trucks and their upkeep. I check his expenses, but I know that he takes good care."

"I tried out the family spirit and it works. I do not believe in employers who handle their workers roughly. I want men to work for me, not machines. I believe that if my plant improves their lot, they will help me to support the enterprise. What I give them with one hand, I get it back with the other."

"We discuss together production methods. When the men or girls want an improvement, we discuss it on the spot. It is very seldom that I impose anything on them. We talk about it before, and we are happy afterwards. If we make a mistake, well, there is nothing against trying again !"

"You want to know if my workers have a union here ? I know that there is some talk about it. But I will not refuse to discuss things with anyone, worker or union leader. I know very well that I cannot look after everything that regards the welfare of workers. If they need a union to help improve their conditions, they know what to do, and I will not go against them. It is not for me to judge. But I assure you, the union does not frighten me. On the contrary, it would perhaps help me discover new points of view that I have not yet considered. In any case, I have nothing to loose in discussing with a union. It might do us all good here."

"It is because ten years ago, there was nothing here. Well! look. Do you think if I had kept my dollars in a safe that there would be all these people on the beach this morning ? If it works it is because we are a real family..."

The testimony of this employer will perhaps be set aside on the grounds that he is managing a small local industry where all the people have known each other for a long time. It will be objected that it is impossible to obtain the close and frequent contacts in an enterprise which takes in several hundreds of workers coming from all sections of a large city. Several have told me that if they had been in the same situation as this employer they would have done the same as he did, but that the management of a small local establishment cannot be compared with the heavy responsibilities that fall on the management of large establishments grouping sometimes thousands of workers. There is no intention of denying or diminishing here the importance of these criticisms. However, when we are given the chance to meet certain enter-prises where a real team spirit has been created, it is well to question ourselves, no matter how important is the enterprise to which we belong. We may ask ourselves: "Can I apply to my enterprise these few principes of management which create harmony between these happy employers and their employees."

CONCLUSION

The author of this article does not pretend to advance that all enterprises should adopt uniformly the same principles of management. Each establishment must face its own problems, and each problem merits being studied in the light of the circumstances surrounding it. It is in fact research on particular cases, even in enterprises of which the structure is simple, that reveals to us the main causes of harmony or discord between the different participants to production. As the results of the different investigations accumulate, it becomes possible to compare various situations and to derive from them a set of principles of which the reasonable application has produced the most successful results. But the sole application of principles which come from obser-

vations in different sectors does not, in itself, carry any guarantee of success, if it is made without discrimination, without an adequate study of the milieu itself which is to be improved. It is at this point that the responsibility of the management must be exercised firmly.

The manager of the enterprise must examine himself in regard to the people he is managing and attempt to understand well their characters and their ambitions. With all the skill this requires, he must be able to analyze the deficiencies in his sector. Are there differences between the objectives of the enterprise and those of the participants ? Are there frequent contacts between the levels ? Many managers seem to possess automatically the aptitude of getting those who contribute to the success of their enterprise, to work together in harmony. Others depend on specialists to carry out well this very delicate task; they feel even more the necessity as the structure of their enterprise becomes more complex with the increase in production. From this point, the constant study of human relations, the analysis of the factors involved, as well as their evaluation must become the constant care of the Personnel Manager. It is to the latter and to the other managers that it then falls upon to put into force the solutions proposed following an objective analysis of the facts. An analysis to which the appropriate levels of management will have made their contribution.

This article will have realized its objective, if it throws light on the importance that must be given to human relations in industry. In fact, the lot of modern business will depend, to a great extent, on the opinion formed by the public in general and the worker in particular, of the social conscience of all managers. Managers cannot acquire this true conscience of their social duties if they do not become used to giving consideration to their workers' problems.

What is urgent is not a renewed formula of employer paternalism, that the workers rightly reject. What is required on either hand is a spirit of understanding, of good will, a true willingness to apply the spirit of Christian principles. Regardless of all its importance, the research on human relations has no intention of "discovering" but rather to "bring again to light" if not to put into force, the principles of common sense so often ignored, but which should be put in practice in accordance with the requirements of each sphere if it is desired that production be an occasion for the enrichment of all mankind.