

NOTES OF MANPOWER REQUIREMENTS FOR PROGRAM AREA FIVE

It is assumed that the recommendations of the Study Committee will be followed with respect to Program Area Five: Individual Behavior and Human Relations. Although provision is made in the Committee's recommendations for extending the areas in which existing behavioral knowledge is applied and for improving practices in the use of existing knowledge, strong emphasis is placed on fundamental research.

It also is assumed that the Study Committee's recommendations with respect to administration, as presented in Chapter IV of the Report, will be adopted. Under the proposed organization there presumably will be at least one Foundation officer whose background of training and experience is primarily in the behavioral sciences. This person would function much as individual members of the original Study Committee functioned. Each member of the Study Committee was selected because of his personal qualifications and familiarity with a particular area of human knowledge. However, all members of the Study Committee participated in all deliberations of the Committee. The report was a joint product. The recommendations in Chapter IV appear to visualize a similar type of operation with a half-dozen Foundation officers functioning under the President in much the same way as the seven-man Study Committee functioned under the Chairman.

What we are looking for then is the member of this team whose professional training and experience has been in the behavioral sciences.

The Nature of the Job

The job this individual will have to perform is largely one of appraisal. Since the Foundation can not possibly grant all requests for financial support

it must assume responsibility for selection. Anything other than random selection involves appraisal. Successful appraisal in the field of project selection involves:

- (1) Ability to see clearly the obstacles to further progress and to pick spots which, if attacked, are likely to yield break throughs.
- (2) Ability to successfully appraise men with respect to their shrewdness in selecting key points of attack on basic problems.
- (3) Ability to appraise methods from the standpoint of their probable effectiveness in solving a particular problem.

With respect to the first specification, I doubt if one can count on finding a genius to whom the nature of all problems in the field of human behavior stands clearly revealed. It will be necessary, I suspect, to depend upon the laborious and painful process of keeping abreast of progress and professional thinking in the field, striving at all times to further clarify basic problems and continually probing for areas that might yield to attack. It is important in connection with this "keeping up" process to maintain close personal touch with workers in the field taking time to listen to their ideas and probe their minds. It is also important to discuss fundamental problems and ideas with persons outside the field since one can never be certain as to where one will pick up valuable leads. Here the man we are looking for must have the ability to reduce technical jargon to simple propositions that people outside the field can understand. This can be done in most fields including the behavioral sciences.

But merely keeping abreast of developments and discussing ideas with

persons inside and outside the field is not enough. This is not merely a job of reporting or collecting opinions. The purpose to be served is the same as the Study Committee had in mindⁱⁿ the many interviews and reviews of memoranda which it undertook during the course of its work. The purpose is to gain understanding as a basis for judgment concerning strategic areas of attack. The process involves constant sifting, testing and evaluation. It calls for a tough, rigorous mind. The incumbent must keep an open mind in the sense that he is willing to modify his views under the impact of new ideas and new evidence. This does not mean that he vacillates. He does not accept without rigorous appraisal but he is always willing to appraise. In addition to ability and willingness to work at the job, it is to be hoped that the Foundation is so fortunate as to find one of those rare people who by the very keenness of their perception seem almost able to sense strategic areas of attack.

Assuming a decision has been reached to support research in a given area, a second appraisal problem presents itself. Is this man more likely to hit upon a productive approach than that one? This involves the capacity to evaluate men with respect to their research ability. Some people have this capacity but I am not sure where they get it or how one judges in advance whether a particular person has it.^{1/}

The third area of appraisal involves research methods. It is not assumed that the Foundation will attempt to specify methods but it is impossible to avoid an appraisal of methods when a project is submitted for financial support.

^{1/} Unless someone else knows how to do this, perhaps this is a problem for research in Program Area Five.

The person whose job we are attempting to describe must be competent to appraise the suitability of a proposed method of attack to the problem at hand if he is to exercise sound judgment in passing upon projects. It is important in this connection that he be not only open-minded in the matter of research approach but have a flair for visualizing the possibility of hitherto untried approaches as well as the possibilities of more or less standard procedures.

Regardless of a foundation's desire to maintain objectivity and aloofness, it can not possibly avoid the responsibility of influencing directions of research. Foundation officers, by their power to make or withhold grants, are in effect operating in a national laboratory and should have many of the attributes of a skillful research director. This does not mean that they assume responsibility for "directing" research in the usual sense of the term. It does mean that in addition to making grants they inevitably influence research by their visits to major research laboratories to keep abreast of what is going on; by asking probing questions during the course of their visits; by suggesting that A in one institution might find it worthwhile to talk with B in another etc. etc. In addition to the attributes of a diplomat, this kind of activity calls for a very special type of mind if the operation is to be successful. It calls for ability to ask the skillful, probing question which causes a research worker to re-examine his premises and perhaps his methods of attack. It calls for the type of mind that can occasionally recognize the germ of an idea during the course of a conversation before the person who threw out the idea recognizes it as such. It is a stimulating function. It is not "directing" in the sense of giving orders but it is directing in the sense of influencing the thinking of persons directly engaged in research. Since this kind of "direction" or "influence" is inevitably

exerted by a foundation, it is imperative that it be on a constructive basis.

Qualifications of the Man

The Foundation officer under discussion should have a broad background of training in the behavioral sciences. He needs this as a basis for communicating with workers in the field and as a basis for the type of appraisal previously described.

Without being wedded to a particular type of approach, he needs to be familiar with all the research techniques used in the field. For example, he should be at home with mathematics and statistics without taking the dogmatic position that statistical analysis of mass data represents the only key to future progress in the behavioral sciences.

It strikes me that a comparatively young man (35-45) is more likely to be abreast of his field and at home in the use of a wide range of research techniques than most older persons. As one grows older it is easy to leave the learning of new skills to younger persons in the field. Some older workers do manage to keep up with the procession, of course.

But familiarity with the field and knowledge of research techniques is not enough. Also needed is a particular quality of mind. The Foundation needs a person who will maintain a vigorous interest and fresh outlook with respect to the whole range of the behavioral sciences and related fields. In addition to this type of interest, mental capacity, mental alertness and mental and physical vigor are required.

The job requires a certain restlessness of mind -- the sort of person who is continually probing and questioning -- constantly sifting and checking both ideas and evidence. Yet there must be a quality of stability in the sense that he does not vacillate and flit from idea to idea so that one never knows

where he stands. There must be open-mindedness without vacillation -- willingness to change judgments under the impact of new ideas and new evidence but only after rigorous appraisal.

It seems to me that the quality of mind that is needed is not necessarily associated with either "generalists" or "specialists" in the usual sense of these terms. I have known people in both categories who seem to me to have something of this quality. Likewise, I have known persons in both categories who seem to me to lack it. I do not know how to predict in advance whether a person has it, although I think if it is present it can be discovered during the course of extended discussions in a field of knowledge with which the person is familiar.

I think that if I had the job of looking for a man I would first get the names of a group of young men, preferably in the 35-45 age range, who had the background and training desired and who, as nearly as I could find out in advance, appeared to have the other qualifications for which I was looking. After intensive checking and interviews I would hope that it might be possible to employ two or three of the most promising prospects on leave of absence for a year with no commitment beyond that time. In view of the exciting possibilities in this field I should think this would not be difficult. At the end of the year I would hope that I would be sufficiently sure of myself to select my man.

Notes on Age and "Name" Candidate

It has been suggested that the writer would look for likely prospects for foundation officers in the 35-45 age group. There are a number of reasons for this.

1. There are not many positions of the kind described in Chapter IV of the Study Committee's Report in this or any other country. This means that it is not likely to be possible to lift a man who has proven himself out of an existing job. What is needed, then, is adaptability and capacity for growing into a job with rather special requirements. Some older men have this but the probabilities of finding it are greater, I think, in the younger age group.

2. Range of interests is not, I suspect, very closely associated with age. This is not advanced as a reason for selecting a young man.

3. This is a job which is going to take a great deal of both mental and physical energy. Youth has the advantage here.

4. If one makes a mistake in hiring a young man, it is usually possible to unload him. If one hires a man over 50 or 55 at a good salary, the chances of moving him if he does not fit one's needs are not good. The temptation is to put up with him.

5. Older men do not always keep up with developments in all parts of their fields nor are they so likely to be well-informed in related fields. There are, of course, exceptions. However, by the time one reaches 40 or 45 he is likely to have staked out an area for intensive cultivation and to limit himself to activities he considers essential to getting on with his particular job. Many older persons in the social sciences, for example, do not have sufficient mathematics to follow some of the newer developments. Few of them will ever go back and remedy this deficiency.

6. If the officers of the Foundation are to work as a team, like the Study Committee worked, a measure of flexibility, a willingness to give and take, is required. In most cases, advancing age does not improve one's ability to do this sort of thing. Again, there are exceptions.

7. There is the basic administrative consideration of keeping a reasonable range of ages so that the staff does not "grow old together." Every once in a while a university department lies dormant for years as a result of this malady. This argues for a range of ages. The top or senior staff of the Foundation are for obvious reasons likely to be over 50. I would look for younger men for the next echelon.

8. In my judgment, it would be dangerous to pick a staff of "name" personabilities. Many a promising research institute and university department has been wrecked on this rock. In some cases the members of such a collection spend their time fighting or jockeying for position; in others they rest upon their established reputations. Such persons can make real contributions, but I would use them liberally in the capacity of consultants and sparingly as permanent staff.

9. Persons of national reputation are likely to be older and to have established a particular circle of acquaintances with whom they exchange and check ideas. This circle is not likely to include an adequate sample of young men. If progress is being made in any field, the young men should, and usually do, provide more than their share of the new ideas; witness the natural sciences during the past 25 years.

10. Older men with reputations are more likely to give advice to younger men, rather than ask questions about their ideas.

11. The "Report of the Study for the Ford Foundation on Policy and Program" was well received on its merits, not because the authors as individuals had national reputations but because they came up with a good job. Each man had a solid reputation in his field plus energy, intellectual curiosity and willingness to work. I am not sure a committee of "names" would have done so

well. For one thing, a "name" man finds the demands on his time such that he is seldom permitted to do the thorough-going job on a particular assignment of which he is capable. I doubt if a Foundation can entirely shield him from such demands.